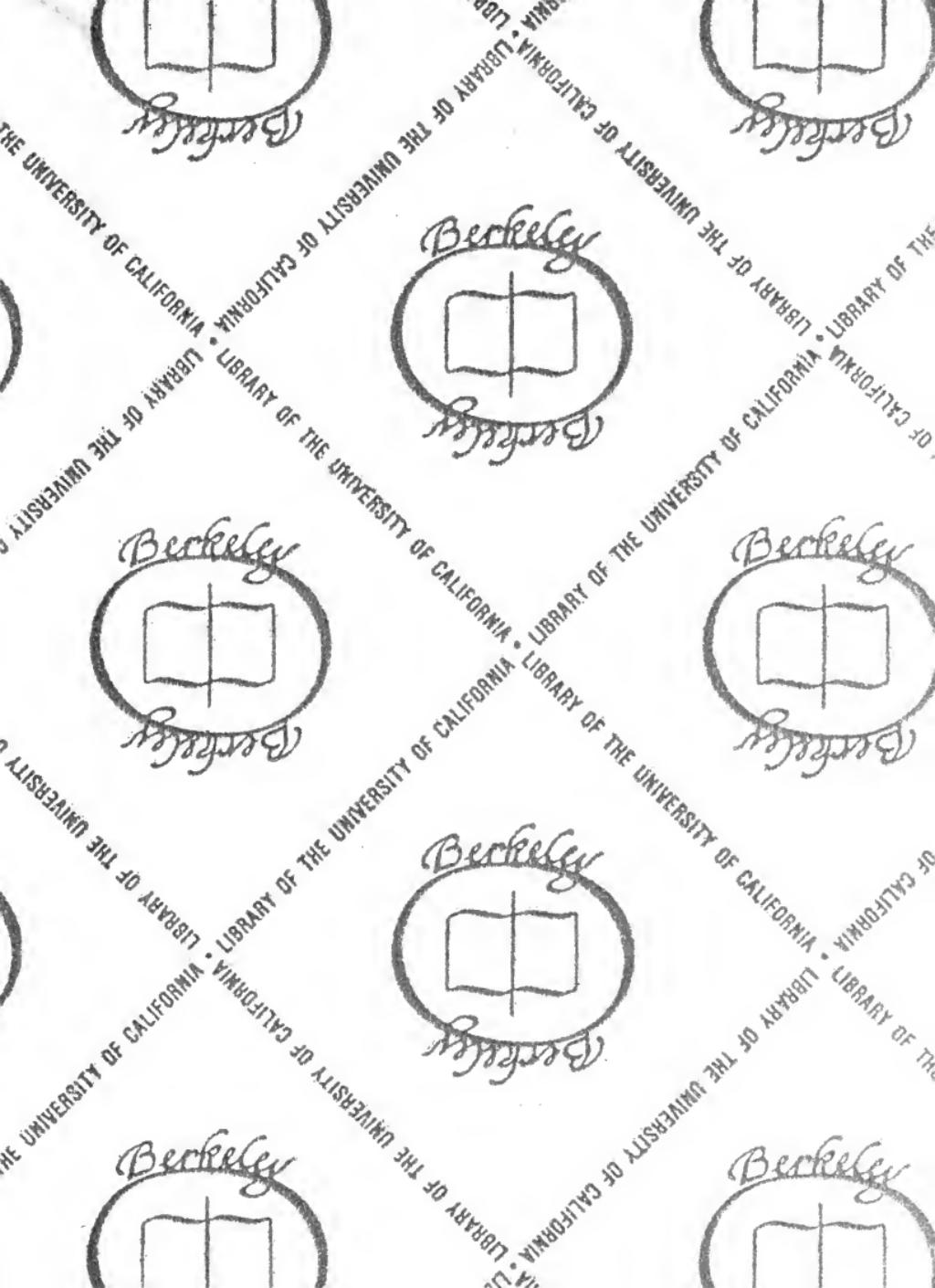
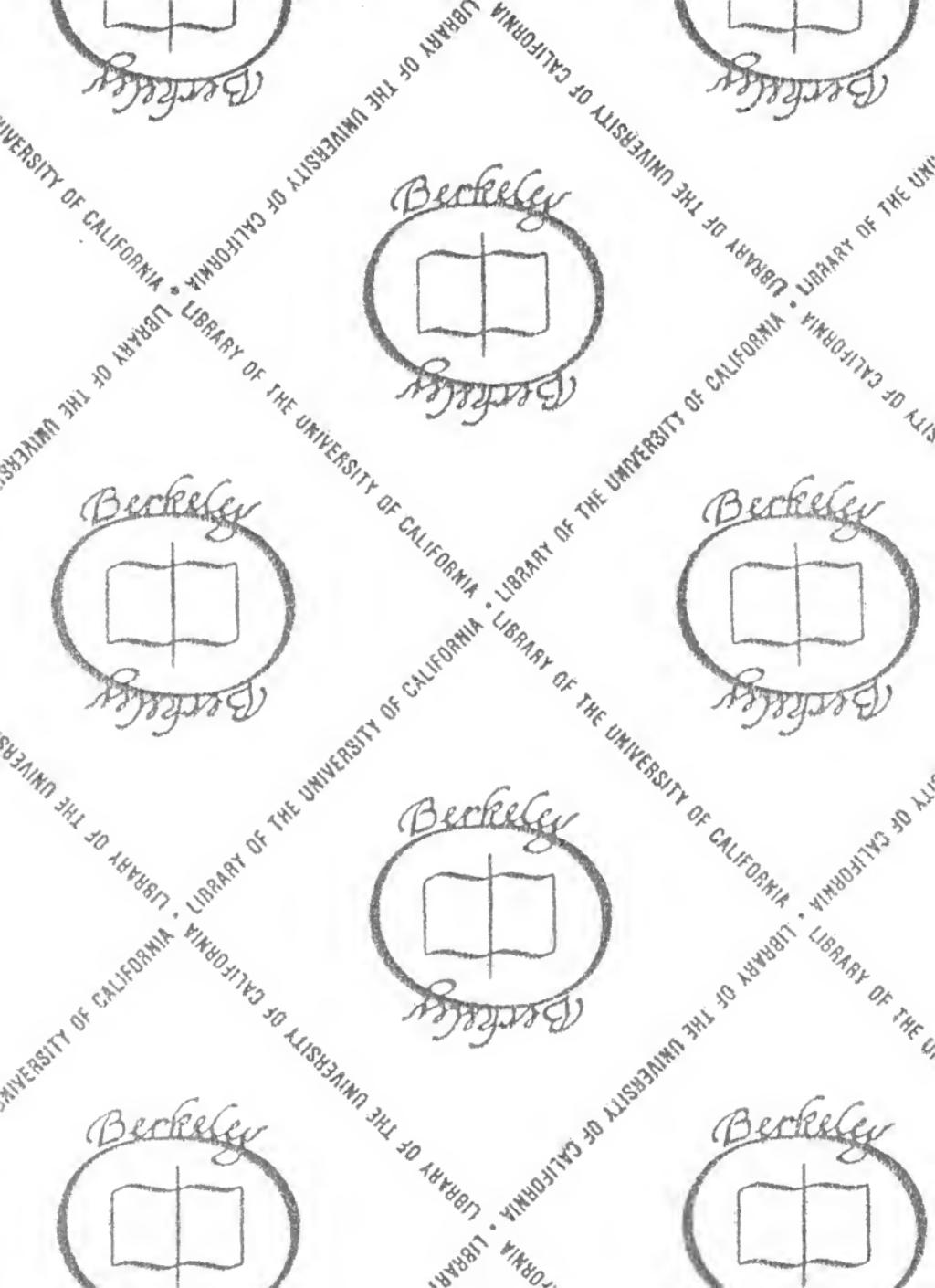


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# FOREST AND GAME-LAW

## TALES.

BY

HARRIET MARTINEAU.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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GENTLE AND SIMPLE.

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GENTLE AND SIMPLE.



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## GENTLE AND SIMPLE.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### THE MEADOW.

LUKE VOILE was a stout youth, capable of hard work in ditching and grubbing, and so little tired by the hardest work that he always went home whistling, both to his dinner (when he did not dine in the field) and in the evening. He looked always just the same, when thus returning over the meadows which stretched along the banks of the Dove, in Staffordshire :—he was always pulling his heavy feet along, and rolling in his gait, and had his mouth formed for a whistle, and wore the same rusty old cap, apparently, and the same smock frock: and he trod exactly the same track every week-day of the year, except when the river rose, and flooded the meadows so that he had to go round. On those occasions, if in winter, he opened his eyes rather wider than usual, stood a minute while slowly summoning up the idea

that he must go round : and if in summer, he also opened his eyes wider, and experienced a thought. Then it was that the old rhyme of the country occurred to him,

“ In April Dove’s flood  
Is worth a king’s good.”

He did not know what a king’s good was : but he understood about April, and the Dove and its flood ; and that the flood was sometimes a good thing for the meadows, though it made him go round. And thus one of the benefits of such a flood was that it caused an unusual exercise of Luke Voile’s mind. His eyes remained wide open till he reached home ; so that his grandmother always knew by his look that the river had risen, if she had not heard it before, or guessed it by his being two or three minutes later than usual.—On his part, Luke got his tongue ready to speak as fast as he could,—(which was very slow)—to tell the fact, and thus obviate a scolding from his grandmother for being late,—she being a very particular woman, and carrying all her points by being cross. It must be supposed that she did not make a point of being loved ; yet it was strange if she did not ; for she was very ready at loving others. She loved Luke, though she scolded him a good deal. He was docile ; but that she did not seem to appre-

ciate ; for every body was docile who came within reach of her tongue. He was tall and strong ;—as fine a youth, she said to herself, as one often sees at eighteen ; and he toiled every day of his life, except when now and then out of work, and on Sundays ; and he brought his earnings to her, as soon as he was paid ; and he went straight to their allotment, and dug like a giant, at over-hours, and would have done any other part of the gardening, but that she chose to keep the nicer business for her own hands, and those of the younger children under her eye.

Their mother, her daughter, was dead. Their father was a sailor, seldom at home, and not very regular in sending them his pay. They had all come hither from the coast, on the death of their mother. Granny Stott had a mind to return, after her husband's and daughter's death, to the place where she had been brought up ; and back to Staffordshire she came, desiring her son-in-law to step over to see his children when he could, on his return from his voyages, and always, of course, to remit his earnings. So little ensued upon either of these orders that only the two elder children remembered much of their father ; and the family were extremely poor. A sum now and then dropt in from Hull, with a line or two from

Voile: and the children thereby chanced occasionally to obtain a little winter clothing, or granny was made easy for the quarter about her rent: but, on the whole, they were sadly pinched; and if it had not been for the allotment let to them by their neighbour, the Rev. Mr. Holloway, they could not have got through one or two hard winters.

It was in the cheerful spring succeeding one of these hard winters,—on a fine evening in the middle of May, that Luke was coming home, whistling as usual, and trudging across a meadow belonging to farmer Eyre, his employer, when he found his path flooded,—there having been rains in the hills above which had caused the river to rise. It was no great matter; and Luke had only to pass along the upper part of the gently-sloping meadow. But his mind was roused, in its occasional way; so much so that as he passed under the hedge, he took note of a frog which crossed before his eyes, and stood a minute, to see where it would jump to. It jumped up to the bank; and there, among some long rich grass, Luke saw something which made him cleverer than anything had ever made him before. He saw a nest with fourteen eggs in it: (he could count up to twenty :) and on the nest sat a bird. Off went his cap, and over the bird and

nest and all. The bird fluttered a good deal; so he twisted her neck: then he put the eggs in his cap, and walked off, forgetting to whistle as he looked at the bird.—He wished he could meet somebody to show his prize to: and at the gate which opened into the highway he did meet an acquaintance,—Waterston, a miner, with whom he sometimes walked along a bit of the road, when they were going to their work at the same hour.

“‘Tis a partridge, and partridge’s eggs,” declared Waterston.

“Lor! is it?”

“Where did you get it?—Ay! that’s on Eyre’s farm;—your master’s.”

“Ay! right coming home, across the field.”

Waterston was going to the beer-shop, to refresh himself after his work: but he knew there was no use in asking Luke to go with him, even on this great occasion. Luke had no money to spend in beer; and he would as soon have thought of going to the moon as anywhere but straight to his grandmother.

“Don’t let the eggs get cold, if you want to hatch them,” said Waterston. “Do you want to hatch them?”

Luke scratched his head. He did not know

what he wanted with the eggs. "The bird's warm," said he.

"Ay; but there's not much use in that, as she's dead. She'll soon be cold."

Luke scratched his head again.

"Hie home, lad, and ask your granny to put them in a stocking before the fire,—or in something warm:—that is, if you want to hatch them."

Here was something to do. Luke hied home, to propose to his granny to put the eggs into a stocking before the fire.

Granny Stott was already in not the best humour. She was busy on the allotment, which was within sight of the cottage; and, as soon as she saw Luke go up to the door, she called out to him and beckoned, and told him he was late; and then she was going to relieve her mind by showing him how the game had been nibbling and poking about among her young potatoes and peas and spring greens, and her little patch of grain. Her way of complaining was a sort of railing which made the hearers feel as if they were somehow the culprits: and so whenever his granny complained of the mischief of the game in their allotment, Luke stood abashed, and felt as if granny was angry with him for what the hares

and pheasants had done. On this occasion, however, she was so astonished at what she saw in his cap, that she was dumb for a minute or two, when Luke made haste to say what he had got ready about keeping the eggs warm in a stocking.

“Warm in a stocking!” cried granny Stott. “I’ll keep your fool’s head warm!” And she gave him a punch in the head which would have charmed a zealous game-preserved.

Luke pleaded, when he could get a hearing, that this was what Waterston advised him to do, if he wanted to hatch the eggs.

“And who wants to hatch the eggs?” cried granny, knocking his cap out of his hand, and spilling the eggs, which she trod on with vast energy, while Luke stood the picture of dismay. And she shook her fist at the damaged part of her garden ground, and said that any but a fool would see that they had enough of Mr. Treherne’s birds without bringing home eggs, to hatch more.

“But they are not Mr. Treherne’s,” pleaded Luke. “I got them in master’s meadow,—by the hedge.”

Granny was going to ask who cared where he got them, when it occurred to her that she herself cared very much. If they had been brought from Mr. Treherne’s land, his keepers might have

been after Luke : whereas, she had never heard of farmer Eyre's having made any difficulty about the game on his farm. She was not aware, or had forgotten, that farmer Eyre had no portion in the game on his own land,—the game being reserved by his landlord, and let to a neighbouring squire,—the proprietor of a small estate,—Mr. Sleath.

“ And what am I to do with this ? ” said granny, picking up the partridge, which lay on the path, looking piteous with its twisted neck and half-closed eyes. Luke did not venture to speak.

“ ‘Tis not safe to sell it, at this season,” observed granny. “ I will carry it in my apron to poor Jenny Clark. She is so weakly ! and she has not had a comfortable morsel to eat, fit for a sick person, this month past.—The Clarks may pluck it,” she continued, as she carefully covered it with her apron ; “ for I won’t have any feathers flying about, to tell tales to the children.—And you,—you silly lad—do you pick up those eggshells, and throw them away :—and don’t leave a mark of them on the path.”

Luke set to work : but granny had not done her lecture yet. She turned back from the gate, saying :—

“ And mind you tell nobody, for your life, what

a silly thing you have done. Let's hope nobody saw you."

There was something in Luke's way of scratching his head as he kneeled on the path that told his tale. Granny returned on her steps; and the push she gave him at once threw him over on his side, and brought out the news that he had met Waterston, and shown him the eggs and the bird.

Waterston meantime was fulfilling his intention of refreshing himself at the beershop. Several men were there, with the same object. This was also the place of resort,—the clearing-house of a certain set of neighbours, who met every evening to exchange their gossip, and settle their balances of news,—without which final proceeding they would hardly have considered the business of the day properly done. To old Groves, who always stood with his back to the wall, smoking his pipe, it was essential to know all that was done, and much that was said, within a circuit of some miles: and it was understood between him and the keeper of the beershop, Satchell, that Groves's patronage was given on condition of Satchell's acting as reporter of all that was told in the shop, between morning and night.

When they had overheard Waterston tell a man at the counter about Luke and the nest, Groves said to Satchell, with a wink,

“A nice scrape for a lad to begin with, that, Satchell! As nice a beginning as one often hears of.”

“Why, you would not set an eye on him?” replied Satchell. “He is such a simple lad,—you may have a better than he, any day. You never saw such a simple lad. Why, if Waterston had told him to sit on the eggs to keep them warm, there he would have sat till they hatched off;—unless his granny had knocked him off the nest. You will never make anything of him.”

“But you see, he is a stout young fellow; and if he gets on our side, he will be one the less against us; for you may rely on it, Lisamer will hire such a stout one as that for a watcher. The lad will be sure to be out o’ nights, on the one side or the other . . . .”

“Well, then, to be sure, it will be best for the lad himself to be with us. But what can you do with such a gawky?”

“We’ll see whether he has not something in him. He has learned to drive a spade well in; and a boy that has learned one thing may learn another. And he need not be able to do us any

harm. We'll manage it all for his good and our own."

"Ay, do ! Do him nothing but kindness, for they are poorly off,—those Voiles. And the old vixen herself is an honest, thrifty, hard-working old body : so, give them a help, if you like, but nothing worse."

"I'll give them a lift," said Groves, with a decisive nod. "What you have to do is to get the story of the nest to Pole's ear to-night."

"To-night!"

"Yes : for the chance of finding either bird or eggs still extant, you know."

"I know," said Satchell, taking his turn to nod with decision.

He went and joined his other customers, and soon brought them to the point of going before dark to the meadow, to try to find the empty nest. Any object will serve for idlers who want to pass an hour. Satchell knew this ; and he knew that one of Mr. Treherne's keepers was pretty sure to hear immediately from Mr. Sleath's people of anything that took place in relation to game on Mr. Eyre's farm, where Squire Sleath rented the shooting.

Accordingly, when Lisamer, Mr. Treherne's head-keeper, was locking the door of his lodge for

the night, his assistant, Pole, came up with information which would not bear delay. One of farmer Eyre's labourers had stolen a bird and her eggs, and shown them to a miner who could swear to the fact, but had rather not come forward.

Mrs. Lisamer glanced at her husband's face while he gave his orders to Pole. The orders were to lay an information, the next morning, and get a summons, and use all means to secure a conviction. When Pole was gone, and Lisamer had bolted his door again, his wife said—

“I am afraid here is more vexation, dear.”

“Yes, indeed; vexation enough! No end to the vexation!”

“I hoped,” said the wife, “that when the season was over we should have peace and quiet for some months. People told us it would be so.”

“It used to be so: but the taking the live game and eggs in the spring and summer is almost worse now than the winter poaching. If we go on in this way, I don't know how I am to meet my master, next season.”

“Why, this is a small matter, is not it? It is not like clearing a cover. And one labourer taking a nest is not like the doings of a poaching club.”

“'Tis bad enough. Among them, they give us

no rest. We must not pass over any case, you see. We must have them all up, for the sake of a lad like this labourer;—for his own sake, you see, as much as because of my own duty. But among them they give us no rest.”

“We thought it a great thing to get this place,” said the wife, “and Mr. Treherne says you are the very man for it . . . .”

“He is wrong there,” said Lisamer. “I am not the man for it.”

“He meant, as he said, for ability and knowledge and care and honesty. And he must be a judge of that. But I think myself that the place requires a sterner man. Mr. Treherne does not know how hard a place it is, nor how these vexations trouble you.”

“Not he! Nor any one else. Why should they?”

“But if you are not the man, let us give it up. Let us go.”

“Where can I go? How can I give up such a place? It would be just the same thing over again somewhere else.”

“I thought there were more gentlemen’s seats in this county than in most. I thought if we went somewhere where they do not preserve so strictly, or lie so close together . . . .”

“No,” said her husband. “Somebody must go through with it: and it may as well be one as another.”

“And much best one who is thought of as Mr. Treherne thinks of you. Surely that is an encouragement, dear.”

“Yes, it is,—as far as it goes.” And Lisamer wound up his watch, looking at the candle in such an absent way that his wife would not interrupt his thoughts, but went to look at her baby.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE COURT.

THE next morning, granny Stott was so busy that she almost forgot the vexation of the preceding evening. All the little furniture of the cottage was turned out of doors, and she was white-washing, with a brush and pail lent by the Clarks, in return for the dinner she had taken for the invalid. Granny had her patched old gown tidily pinned up round her, and she was whitening the cracked walls diligently, scolding the children between times. Her temper was not improved by the satisfaction she really found in cleaning her cottage; for there were sad vexations to set off against this satisfaction. The dilapidations of the place were so much worse every time,—there were so many more holes in the roof, so many more cracks in the walls, so many more lattice panes absent, that the poor dame was worried and anxious in proportion as she looked into her affairs. And then, the furniture! She

was almost afraid to move or touch it, lest it should fall to pieces. It was so bad now that it would be no resource to sell or pawn in the hour of direst distress: and it was really a pain to a decent woman like her to look at it in a full out-of-doors light. So the children had no pleasure in these cleaning days, and were all eager for the task permitted to only one,—the keeping watch on the allotment against the hares and rabbits. The two little boys took it in turn to halloo and spring the rattle at the game; and the one off duty was very apt to be missing when summoned to come and be beaten, or desired to go and tell his Sunday-school teacher what a naughty boy he was. As for the girl, now fifteen, alas! for her if any ricketty article went to pieces under her hands in the cleaning,—if the leg of the stool came out, or the bent and tottering tin candlestick parted at the crack. Bell was tolerably happy when set to wash the floor, for the bricks, though broken away and uneven, so that they could never look nice, would stand a careful scrubbing, which was not the case with anything else in the house. When this morning letting fall a tear or two over the last bit of looking-glass which had dropped out of its frame, and wondering how she should dare to tell

granny, she was startled by granny's inquiry from the window who it was that was talking to Job at the garden gate, and taking him off from his watch.

Bell said it was the constable, little thinking what a pang she struck through granny's heart by the words.

A rush of love and pride in Luke came over her heart with the pang. She would not have the younger ones know it if any disgrace was to befall Luke: so forth she went, to meet the constable half way between the allotment and the cottage, first sharply desiring Bell not to look off her work, and to keep little Dan beside her.

When the constable wanted to know where Luke was, she wanted to know where he should be but at his work; and there the interview terminated; for the constable hastened away.—Of course, it was no surprise to granny that Luke did not come home to dinner, and that no neighbour came near them that day. She knew too surely what they were afraid to tell,—that Luke had been served with a summons, and was to be tried before the magistrates to-morrow.

At night, the constable came again,—and this time of his own accord, and for a friendly purpose. He braved all displeasure and misconcep-

tion for the sake of advising that Mr. Frewer, the young attorney, should be spoken to to defend Luke to-morrow, or the case would go hard with the lad. Mr. Frewer was used to these affairs, and would do the best that could be done, and for the least money.—The reply was clear. Where was the money to come from ? Never had the dame been so bitterly convinced of her poverty as this day ; and sore was the anguish with which she told Luke, when at length he slunk home, that unless she could coin her heart's blood, she could do nothing for him. He must take his chance.

Luke cut a wretched figure before the court, the next day. The Petty Sessions were held in the chambers of the Clerk to the Magistrates; and three magistrates were on the bench ;—Mr. Treherne, who attended all game cases wherever he went, from a lively interest in the morals of the poor ; Mr. Sleath, and the Rev. Mr. Holloway.

Luke never looked up at them at all. He cried bitterly, and aloud, the whole time ; loud when Pole came forward as informer ; louder still when Waterston was sworn as witness ; and loudest of all when sentence was passed. He protested that he did not know, till his granny told him after-

wards, that he had done any harm : he had taken bird's-nests many a time, and nobody told him it was wrong ; and he would never do so again, as long as he lived, if they would let him off now.

There was some little delay at one moment. When it appeared that though taken on Eyre's farm, the bird and eggs were the property of Mr. Sleath, as the renter of the game, a question arose, from some unknown quarter, whether Mr. Sleath should remain on the bench. It seemed as if Mr. Treherne thought he should, and Mr. Holloway thought he should not. It ended in the little gentleman's rising, his pretty black eyes more fiery than usual,—his pink cheeks more red, and his tell-tale mouth all peevishness, through its assumed smirk. He walked to a seat at a little distance, making his boots stamp and creak as much as possible ; and there he sat the matter out,—now settling his collar, now whipping the leg of his chair with his riding-whip, but casting unintermitting glances of magisterial anger at the prisoner.

When the evidence was concluded, and it was found that there was no defence, the magistrates went into consultation ; and then Mr. Sleath drew near,—ostensibly to listen ; but he contrived to convey his own opinion of what he should think it

right to do in the first case of the kind in which he should have to adjudicate. Vice of this kind was spreading so extensively among the poor, that magistrates ought not to reconcile it to themselves to trifle with such cases. Every one ought now to be made the severest example of.—Mr. Treherne was of the same opinion.—Mr. Holloway supposed that it was for the sake of example only that they would severely punish this lad; for it was clear that he was innocent of all notion of guilt in the matter.—Mr. Sleath laughed, and wondered, in a soliloquizing tone, how often vice would be punished if the offender's protestations were listened to.

While Mr. Sleath went to speak to the clerk, to learn what was the heaviest penalty that could be inflicted in this case, Mr. Holloway observed to Mr. Treherne,

“There is no occasion to push this matter so far as he is inclined. I could wish that he had absented himself, I must say.”

“These upstart squires are more jealous than we are,—more tenacious about their new rights,” observed Mr. Treherne. “You may know a retired manufacturer from a real country gentleman, the first time a game case comes before him.”

“It is downright virulence in this case,” said Mr. Holloway.

“You are in the other extreme, remember,” said Mr. Treherne. “There is a medium between pressing the extreme penalty against a new offender, and conniving at vice, as you are disposed to do. Give this fellow a taste of the law, but don’t press him too hard;—that is my judgment.”

“He is very young, and very ignorant,” observed the clergyman.

“Then give him a lesson. If he wants teaching, teach him to let game and eggs alone. If you do not, we shall have no game left.”

“The penalty,” said Mr. Sleath, coming up to his colleagues . . . .

“Come, Sleath, do not tell us anything about the penalty. Go out of ear-shot, I beseech you. Leave us to do justice; and you shall do the same for us whenever we come as prosecutors. I advise you to go away.”

Mr. Sleath coloured up, settled his collar, smiled painfully, and walked away to some distance. Not quite away; for he could not deny himself the spectacle of Luke’s sentence: but he did not consult any more with his colleagues.

What he desired, and intended to inflict on the

first opportunity was—for killing the bird, costs 9s. 6d., and constable 1s. 6d., with a fine of £1 6s. In default of immediate payment, two months' imprisonment. For taking the eggs, 11s. costs, with a fine of £3 10s. In default of immediate payment, two months' imprisonment, with hard labour. This was the sentence he had known passed in a similar case lately; and it was what he expected now.

Mr. Holloway, however, after consulting with the clerk, would agree to nothing more severe than a fine of £1 10s., or, in default of payment, one month's imprisonment, with hard labour. At the end of that time, the culprit must find securities for his good behaviour for a year.

Luke was duly informed what a lenient sentence this was, in consideration of its being his first offence: but he cried more than ever, calling out incessantly

“O! don't send me to prison! Don't send me to prison! I have got no money. O! don't send me to prison!”

Mr. Sleath was less insensible to the leniency. He whipped his boots more than ever, and resolved to himself that if this was the justice he obtained from his colleagues, he would pay them off when his turn came, discredit their witness, if possible,

and acquit their prisoner. However, there was, in this case, one chance of an increase of punishment about which the magistrates had no option. Such a lad as this was not likely to be able to find securities, at the end of the month ; and this would protract his imprisonment another six months.

Luke was in course of removal, still blinding himself with the back of his hand, and crying out “ O ! don’t send me to prison ! ” when the affair took a new turn. The magistrates were saved the trouble of making out a commitment. A man came forward, and paid the fine ; and Luke was told that he was discharged.

“ Who is your friend ? ” asked the constable of the staring Luke. “ Who is your friend ? ” he repeated, jogging the lad’s elbow.

“ I don’t know,” said Luke. “ That is, I’ve seen him,—bringing new shoes, I think. God bless him, however ! ”

“ O ! ay,” said the constable. “ It is the shoemaker that lives between this and Cheadle. He is a good friend of yours. But it is queer, if you and he are not acquainted.”

“ God bless him ! ” cried Luke again.

The shoemaker beckoned to Luke to leave the court with him, which he did without remembering to touch his forehead to the magistrates.

“ You see, gentlemen, you see!” said Mr. Sleath. “ So much for your leniency! The fellow has got off, you see.”

“ Don’t be savage, Sleath,” said Mr. Treherne. “ It would have been the same if we had fined him ten pounds. And you should not care so much about a nest in a meadow. You know one does not care much for sport on grass land. ‘Tis no great loss.”

“ And the lad has not got off,” observed Mr. Holloway. “ He will be hard pressed for months to come to work out his debt.”

And the next case was called on, half Luke’s penalty having been paid over to Pole, as the informer.

Luke wanted to pour out his gratitude, if he did but know how, when his new friend told him he owed him nothing. He pointed to Groves, who was sauntering at some distance, and said

“ There’s the man you may thank. ‘Twas he that got you off.”

When Groves heard how matters had gone, he observed

“ We must manage better next time. You should have had Mr. Frewer to defend you, lad. There was so little time, you see; and you are a new hand at it. We must manage better next time.”

"Next time!" exclaimed Luke. "But I don't mean to do it any more."

"That makes little difference," observed Groves. "They have had you up once; and you will be pretty sure to be up again, whether you poach or not."

"Poach!" exclaimed Luke.

"Lord bless the lad! he does not know now what he has been doing!" said Groves, chuckling.

"Why Luke, you're a poacher. Don't you know that? And they will have their eye on you for poaching, whether you do it or not, henceforth: and we must make a friend of Mr. Frewer."

"But if I never do it again," said Luke, whose faculties were so roused by the agonies of this morning, that he became capable of something approaching to reasoning.

"'Tis all the same, lad. Evidence goes for nothing with the magistrates in these cases,—except one here and there. When Mr. Holloway is on the bench, there is a chance; but not otherwise. You see the keepers are the informers, and generally the witnesses: and they have everything to drive them to it. They are jealous of the game; and they like to please their masters; and they can have half the penalty, if they choose. And so, a man once up has no chance against being up

again, if he ever peeps into a wood again, in his whole life : and once up, he has no chance but in having Mr. Frewer."

Luke's spirits were a good deal taken down by this view of his case.

"Keep your heart up, and work, lad," said Groves to him. "You will work out your debt in time ; and I won't be more severe on you than I can't help. You must work hard, and never so much as look at a nest in the grass again, if you should come across one. Now hie home ! "

Luke did so. At first, he lingered about, in dread of meeting his granny. But his roused faculties had not yet sunk back into torpor. It struck him that he had heard quite enough about taking this bird and her eggs, considering that he meant no harm, and should have to think about it a long while yet, while working out his debt. His granny had had her say about it first ; and she could not well say anything more that would do any good.

Under the inspiration of this thought, Luke turned resolutely homewards. Granny's red eyes filled again with tears when he entered : but she was opening out in her tartest manner when he said, as by an absolute necessity, what was on his mind.

“ Come, granny ; I have heard enough of this. You scolded me on Tuesday ; and that will do. I shall have plenty to think of before I work out my debt of thirty shillings. So, don’t you say any more about it.”

“ Thirty shillings ! ” groaned the dame. But she glanced at Luke every minute, thinking “ He will make a fine man ! He has some of his mother’s spirit in him, for all he is so tall and stout.—To think of the lad answering me so ! But he must grow manlike one day or another. If only he is not as bad to me as his father !—Then, this thirty shillings ! I will say it is very hard on a young lad,—almost a child. Where’s the boy to get thirty shillings ? ”

Luke was not without his surprise, all the rest of the day. Granny was as kind to him as if it had been his birthday : and his birthday was half a year off yet !

## CHAPTER III.

### DUBIOUS HAUNTS.

THE next morning, when Luke went to his work, he began whistling mechanically, though he was thinking how badly it would look on Saturday night that he had lost two days' work and wages this week. He still whistled as he passed through the meadow where the nest was: but he turned his head away from that hedge, and looked hard at the river, where there were certainly no nests. But his whistle stopped suddenly when, on his arrival, he found another man at work in his place. He went to farmer Eyre, crying almost as bitterly as ever, to beg for work: but farmer Eyre said it was not a matter quite within his own choice: he was so circumstanced that he could not please himself in such a case:—it was against the wish both of his landlord and the renter of the game that any man convicted of poaching should be employed on the farm. Moved by Luke's despair, he intimated that by and by perhaps, when the

hard season came on, he might give Luke a job now and then: meantime, it was the best season of the year, and he hoped Luke would get on pretty well: but he must not come upon the farm at present.

Luke dared not go home to dinner. When Waterston returned from work in the evening, he found Luke at the same gate where they had met three evenings before, his head leaning on his arm on the top bar,—his whole appearance as disconsolate as possible. Waterston hardly needed to be told what his grief was.

“Ay!” said he. “You are young yet at the troubles of life. Why don’t you take advice of people that have had experience?”

“I dare not go home, and tell my granny I am out of work; and that’s the truth,” said Luke.

“Home! no! not till you have something good to tell there. Why don’t you go to Groves? He is your man for experience.”

“I dare not,—because of my debt.”

“Why, that is the very reason why you should, lad. Groves will get you into work for his own sake,—don’t you see?”

“Can he?” asked Luke, rousing himself. “And I don’t know where to find him!”

“I do. Come along with me.”

And thus was Luke conducted to the beer-shop.

Groves came up to him, and clapped him on the shoulder, saying,

“ Well, lad, have you got to go to the bastile house,—you and your granny and all? Is that to be the end of it? ”

Luke turned away, whimpering, “ I’m sure I don’t know what the end of it is to be. I don’t know what to do.”

“ Well, don’t go thieving. Don’t do that.”

“ I never thought of such a thing.”

“ No: you don’t want to do that. Don’t you know how to set a wire?—You never did? bless me!—Don’t you know how to take things alive,—leverets and the like?—Well: you can pick up eggs when they are under your nose.”

Luke told how he had promised that he would never do that again.

“ Very good! very good! that was all right, lad. And you never would, in Eyre’s fields, if Eyre had given you honest work,—which you reckoned on when you made the promise. But you owe nothing, ’tis my opinion, to the gentlemen who punished you when you meant no harm. If I show you how to set a wire, you can get the creatures that come and eat up your granny’s

allotment, you know; and I'll buy them. They are yours by right, you know."

"But what would Mr. Holloway say?"

"Well; I'll show you something else first. You'll accept a pint of beer now, and . . . ."

"Don't fuddle him," whispered Waterston, "or he'll not see eggs under his nose. He has had no dinner."

"That's another matter," said Groves: "then supper is the order of the day."

As Luke supped and drank his beer, he felt bound in everlasting gratitude to his friend in need.

By the time he had done, Groves and Waterston had arranged their plan. Luke was shown a safe entrance into a cover of Mr. Treherne's, far away from where the keepers were known to be. He was shown how and where to look for pheasants' eggs, and was taught to net the birds. They carried away two brace alive, and plenty of eggs.

"Where are we going with them?" asked Luke, when they were again on the high road.

"To Groves's, to be sure. He takes out a certificate, and so has a right to receive game and sell it."

"A right by law?" asked Luke, not yet know-

ing enough to be puzzled about whether this right extended to live birds and eggs.

“A right by law,” declared Waterston, rather pompously. “Groves has no need to bar his door. All is safe within his door. If a search is made, and they find a crate full of game in the season, he shows his certificate, and they are bound to suppose he shot all the birds himself, and . . . .”

“And does he?”

“Not he! He never carries a gun. But nobody can question his right to have and sell the game.—And if these people find fifty dozen eggs in his back yard, and a few live birds under coops, they cannot question where they come from: so you need not be afraid of the gentry again. They can’t lay a finger on you.”

“But Groves said they would, whether I had done anything or not.”

“That is true too. ’Tis all a chance. Sometimes they lay a man up in jail without his having done the thing; and then again, a man does the thing twenty times without being found out. So one has only to mind one’s own interest.—I mean about the game. I’m not speaking of any thievery;—not about any gentleman’s or farmer’s property that is at home on his land or in his

yards ; only about the wild creatures that roam, and belong everywhere or nowhere."

"Who do these birds belong to ?" asked Luke, a good deal puzzled.

"To us, if we get them on the high road, where we are now. Or to your granny if they come upon her allotment, . . . ."

"Well, they do that often,—the birds from Mr. Treherne's."

"Well ; they are hers while they are on her allotment ; and you know other birds that people call their own would not be so. Turkeys and chickens and ducks would not be hers."

"No, sure."

"She would carry them home to the neighbour they belonged to, and be rough with the neighbour for not keeping them at home."

"Ay ; that she would."

"But if it was pheasants, no one would know who they belonged to ; and so the law says they are her own."

"What, granny's ?"

"Yes ; and that we may have what we can catch of such things on the high road. So don't you be afraid."

"Not I. But I would rather have got them on the high road."

“ Why, yes ; so would I, only they don’t come there quite so much as one might wish ;—any more than nuts fly into one’s pocket of their own accord, in the autumn. One must go nutting to get them, you know.”

“ I like that,” said Luke.

“ And I like going after game. ’Tis fine sport.”

“ So the gentry think.”

“ Yes ; and that’s why they grudge it to the poor man, as they do. But, dear me ! the gentry have such lots of pleasures, they might let the poor man have a share of this,—so little amusement as the poor man has ! And the fact is, they can’t prevent it. If poor men are so made as to like sport, and hares are made to run and birds to fly wild, the poor man will be after the hares and birds, for all the gentry can do.”

“ Yes, sure,” said Luke ; “ and if they are his in his own garden too. But granny never has any. She only sets Job to frighten them off. All they that have allotments say Mr. Holloway might be displeased if they set snares. I wish you would tell her the hares are hers.”

“ Why, I don’t know. If Mr. Holloway was displeased in any way, she might lose her allotment. You’d better get hares in some other

place, where Mr. Holloway would never hear of it."

"But if he should come by, and smell the cooking. I smelt a hare cooking once."

"You'd better sell it, and buy some meat with the money," suggested Waterston.

All this opened a new world of ideas to Luke. He found it no dream, but real enough, however, when Groves put two shillings into his hand, and told him that his debt was also reduced by two shillings. Luke grinned with delight ; and Groves asked him whether he had not made out a good day's earnings, after all ; and pretty easily too.

It was late ; and granny Stott was sleepy and cross : so Luke got to bed without accounting for himself.—In the morning, he went mechanically along his usual path, to his usual destination. His substitute was again at work ; and farmer Eyre again told him to go away :—he could not have him hanging about the place.

He felt almost as disconsolate as ever during the morning, wandering about, and having thought all that he was capable of thinking about the two shillings in his pocket. He was standing with his arms hanging by his sides, about eleven o'clock, looking whether a rat he

had seen in a ditch would come back again, when Mr. Onslow, a large farmer in the neighbourhood, rode up.

“What are you doing there, my lad ?” asked farmer Onslow.

Luke told about the rat, and showed which way it went.

“What is it to you which way the rat went ?” asked Mr. Onslow. “You are not a rat catcher, I’ll be bound.—Well then, why are you not at work ?”

This question put the rat out of Luke’s mind, and brought back the remembrance of his troubles. He told in his own way his story of Mr. Eyre’s refusal to employ him because he had been tried for finding a bird’s nest ; and how he was now out of work.

“What bird—what nest—was it ?”

“A partridge’s.”

“O ! I see.—Come, follow me. Bestir yourself and run after my horse, and I dare say I can find some work for you.”

Luke ran faster than he had ever done in his life, and kept up well with Mr. Onslow’s rather heavy old horse. Panting, grinning, and beyond measure happy, he made some rather bright replies to the questions he was asked about what

he could do.—Mr. Onslow's was a dairy farm ; and Luke knew nothing about cows, further than that they grazed and gave milk : but Mr. Onslow was, year by year, breaking up more of his pasture for growing roots ; so that he could employ a good deal of the most ordinary farm labour. Some people believed that his practice of drainage and root husbandry originated in his fancy for employing as much labour as possible, in order to keep the parish from having any great surplus : and that, by means of his ample capital, and his having the command of the game on his own land, (which was besides at a considerable distance from any preserves,) he had found his methods answer so well that he really could afford to employ, as he did, any poor fellow whom he saw lounging about in want of work. Though not universally popular in his neighbourhood, he was so to a considerable extent. He was much looked up to by the rate-payers generally, and his name was the first name in the world to the dwellers in many cottages within the circuit of a few miles.

Granny Stott blessed his name when Luke ran home for a bit of dinner, and told her where his place of work was now to be. She speeded him away again, and said one of the little boys should bring him his food into the field hence-

forth, if the going and coming so far should take him too much off his work.

As Luke was turning into the field, three gentlemen came riding down the lane; and one of them called to him to open the lane gate. As Luke touched his forehead, as taught when he was a little boy, Mr. Holloway observed to Mr. Treherne that this was the lad who was before them in a scrape the other day. Mr. Treherne pulled up for a moment.

“What business have you here?” he asked of Luke.

“I’m come to my work from dinner, please you, Sir.”

“Who gives you work?”

“Mr. Onslow. I did work for farmer Eyre till now: and now I work for Mr. Onslow.”

“What, Eyre would have nothing more to do with such a fellow as you, eh?”

“No, Sir.”

“There you see what it is to fall into vice. Nobody will trust you; and you will go to jail.”

“I work for Mr. Onslow now, Sir.”

“He will turn you off,—at least he ought,—if you are caught thieving again.—So, take care.”

“I was never caught thieving, Sir,” exclaimed Luke, looking up surprised.

“Why, are not you the lad that was brought up for poaching,—for taking a bird and eggs—only three days since?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Then how can you say you never did any thieving?”

Luke looked puzzled, and the gentlemen rode on, Mr. Treherne observing to Lord B. that he thought they ought to watch Onslow, whose proceedings appeared very strange. Every fellow fresh from jail, every poacher just fined, had only to come to him to get encouragement and countenance.

“Do you object to that?” Mr. Holloway asked.

“I hope he has regard to the honest men first,” observed Lord B.

“If he has,” said Mr. Treherne, “it is only in giving them work. It is no compliment to an honest labourer to put him to work on the same hedge with a poacher. The honest men cannot have much to say for Onslow’s consideration there.”

“I believe they have,” said Mr. Holloway. “They are very grateful to him. Besides the strong *esprit de corps* that there is among those people, it is a fact that they do not consider

poaching a crime: they do not think the worse of a man for it: and, when they see their superiors all set against a man, as they call it, for taking a hare,—when they see him likely to become an outcast, they are naturally grateful to an employer who offers him means of honest bread.”

“That is a testimony, at least, in favour of honest bread,” observed Lord B.

“It is; and a valuable one,” said Mr. Holloway. “I consider Onslow a benefactor to his parish in more ways than by his keeping down the rates.”

“I hope he means well,” said Mr. Treherne. “But I shall keep my eye upon him. These farmers all want watching. They are a set of selfish, shabby fellows, and not to be trusted about the game. Every bad farmer lays the blame of his deficient crops upon the game . . .”

“But Onslow is not a bad farmer, nor an unprosperous one.”

“He bears as much ill will to the game as if he was. He has the same vicious sympathy with poachers as all farmers have. There is not one of them that will see a man take a hare if he can help it. There is not one of them that will know that a man has a snare in his hat, or a bird in his pocket, when the tail feathers are sticking out before his eyes.—And then, when the criminal is

taken and punished, there is always a farmer ready to give him countenance, the moment he comes out of the hands of justice."

"They have the rates to pay, we must remember," observed Lord B. "It is an object to them to keep their labourers at home, rather than in jail, at the cost of the county, and their families in the poor-house, at the cost of the parish. It is their interest to look upon labourers as labourers, as long as possible."

"That is exactly what I say," replied Mr. Treherne. "It is self-interest which makes them countenance vice. They are a shabby, interested, troublesome set. It is no wonder if our parishes are demoralized, while the farmers connive at poaching."

"I think we should be worse than we are without Onslow," declared Mr. Holloway.

"Ah! it is a fancy of yours to pet that man, I know, because he cants about employing the poor; but . . . ."

"I beg your pardon. I never heard a word of cant from Onslow; and indeed we don't exchange a word once a month. Nor do I make pets of canting people."

"I like deeds better than words," Mr. Treherne avowed. "When I see a farmer demoralizing his

labourers by conniving at poaching, I don't care a damn for his professions."

"Nor I," said Mr. Holloway. "But it remains to be proved that Onslow does so."

Waterston came by, the same afternoon. He heard a whistle over the hedge that he thought he knew,—and was half sorry, on hailing the whistler, to find that it was Luke, really engaged on Mr. Onslow's farm.

"How much will you get a week?" he asked.

"I don't know."

"Do you mean that you are doing piece work, or that you have not asked Mr. Onslow?"

"He said I should get a good bellyful, and be out of mischief; and granny's very glad."

"How much did you get at Eyre's?"

"Sometimes seven shillings; sometimes eight."

"Lord! what a poor pittance! I hope you will get more here."

"In course of time, as I improve, Mr. Onslow says. But 'tis not like what miners get, I know."

"No indeed! I often get thirty shillings a week; sometimes more."

"Thirty shillings! But then you are out of work at times."

Waterston leaned over towards Luke, as he said cautiously

“ When I’m out of work, I get thirty shillings in one night, sometimes.—And without a bit of thieving, or anything of that kind ;—never touching a sheep, or a fowl, or so much as a turnip in the fields ;—only the wild creatures.—Ah ! now, you are thinking how you might pay your debt to Groves in one night, if you had such luck. Would not you like to be free at once, eh ?”

“ Why, I should,” said Luke. And Waterston left him to think over the length of time it would take to pay his debt by shaving off what he could spare from eight shillings a week, if indeed it could ever be done ; and how a mine of wealth seemed to open before some lucky people who could get thirty shillings in one night, and buy a pair of shoes whenever they wanted them, and have the rent ready when the quarter came round, and even get a bit of fresh meat for dinner.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE BEERSHOP.

WHEN the shooting season was just at hand, Mr. Treherne was naturally in frequent consultation with his gamekeepers: and they were glad of any opportunity of acquainting their master with the ever increasing difficulty of preserving the game. He was so deeply impressed with the growing depravity of the neighbourhood, that he exerted himself, together with some of the gentry round, to have a police establishment, when the short days came on: and arrangements were made for this purpose.

“ You are aware,” said Mr. Treherne to Lisamer, “ that the police will have nothing to do with the game. The game is not put under the protection of the police, you know.”

“ I know it, Sir. The police would have no time to attend to anything else hereabouts, if they had to guard the game.”

“ They may be of service to you, however,”

said his master ; “ and you to them. You can direct their eye to the most notorious poachers we have ; and they will tell you what men they see prowling about, night or day, or carrying game on the high road. Only, you must be careful not to engage them directly in the protection of game.—It is a shame that it should be so ;—that game, which is the most exposed sort of property, and the most difficult to guard, should be left the least protected by law ;—wholly unprotected by the police.”

“ The complaint of the people about here, Sir, is the opposite of that.”

“ Yes,—ignorant fellows ! I know that. In the very face of the fact that the police can’t interfere about the game, they complain of the severity of the law. But, Lisamer, it is bad for us to be caught in a mistake. In this case to-day, I am persuaded it was no mistake . . . . ”

“ Why, yes, Sir. The truth is, Pole mistook one of the mén, at least.”

“ I don’t believe it. As I told Mr. Holloway and Lord B., I know that lad to be a bad fellow,—a sabbath-breaker, and a notorious poacher,—convicted before, young as he is.”

“ What, Luke Voile, Sir ? ”

“ Yes ; when he ought to be at church, I have

seen him watching for hares on the allotment which his family hold from the clergyman himself,—who certainly never intended his allotments to keep people from church. When Voile was convicted, and Onslow took him on, I knew very well that we should soon have him up again. Pole was right enough, depend upon it.”

“No, Sir. It was such a mistake as will happen sometimes. As Pole lay, watching the snare, he could not be perfectly sure of any of the three but the one opposite to him. They were all stooping down, you see, when they took out the hare; and he did not actually see their faces,—only Tom Jackson’s; and, sure as he felt of Voile and the other, he had better not have been so positive. Voile was certainly two miles away, in the sight of three people, at the time Pole swore to.—It is very clear, Sir; and Mr. Frewer means to demand Pole’s dismissal of you.”

“Yes, yes: I have had a note from him about that. That is nonsense, of course. Pole had nothing to gain by swearing to the wrong person,—if he really did so. It was not a conspiracy, but a mistake. I shall tell him he must be more careful another time: but there is nothing in this affair to warrant my taking a good servant’s bread away from him.—As for the action for false

imprisonment that Frewer threatens, that is absurd. We can justify the warrant. We can show that we did believe the fellow would abscond. You said so in your information, did not you?"

"That I believed Voile would abscond? No; I can't take upon myself to say that I did."

"Yes, you did. Of course, Mr. Sleath would not have issued a warrant without its being justified. Frewer is a troublesome fellow,—very annoying to the magistrates. But it is carrying matters too far to try to make us dismiss our servants for a mistake,—if indeed there is one,—which I don't believe. Voile is a vicious fellow, whether present or absent in this case; and Pole must not be ruined for the sake of such a fellow as that. If Voile has chanced to be out of the mischief this time, he has been in it many another time, I have no doubt, with impunity."

"I have no doubt of that, Sir."

"It shows the depravity of the people round," continued Mr. Treherne, "that their sympathy is all with crime and criminals. What a yell they set up at me to-day, when I came out into the street!"

Lisamer looked away. He had heard the cries of triumph and defiance at Mr. Treherne's defeat;

and they so filled him with <sup>\*</sup>shame now that he could not meet his master's eye.

“That is the spirit in London, you know,” said Mr. Treherne, “on the acquittal of a pickpocket, through any accidental flaw. In London, they dare not yell, as they do here; but the sympathy is the same, whether the man steals pocket-handkerchiefs or hares.—We shall catch Voile again soon; and then they may have no cause to triumph. We shall catch him again soon.”

“I dare say we shall, Sir. Meantime, Sir, would you please to give Pole a caution? Our situation is trying enough, Sir, at the best, in a poaching country like this: and . . . .”

“Yes, yes. I feel for you, I assure you, Lisamer. I shall tell Pole that we must have no more mistakes,—if such, indeed, it was, in this instance.”

Luke was the hero of the beershop this evening. His head was able to take in and bear more now than it was when the summer began. He had come under another training than granny's; had grown aware of some abilities of which he had formerly never dreamed; and had, above all, learned to look up to some clever men who had put money in his pocket, and carried

him through some scrapes.—When wrongfully accused, this morning, after being in custody two nights,—accused by mistake of having helped to take a hare out of a gin,—when he had in fact been at his proper work two miles off,—he could not quite help crying: but he had wept in a more manly way, and had so restrained himself as to say nothing whatever, as Mr. Frewer had advised him. Now, in the evening, he was full of glee. He was righted. He was not to be punished.—He had no money to pay; for Mr. Frewer was fee'd by the club. It was no drawback upon Luke's delight that he had done many acts of poaching, since his conviction in May, without being discovered. His feelings followed his training.

“ You see,” said Groves to him, “ it is as we told you. ‘Tis all a chance with us, and we have only to do the best we can for ourselves. One day, you catch a hare or two that nobody misses, and that belongs, as one may say, to nobody,—or rather to everybody, wherever she may fancy to run;—you may catch two or three such one day, and get a few shillings from me, without anybody objecting: and another day you may be sworn to for taking a hare when you are miles off, thinking altogether of something else. You

see, lad, 'tis all a chance, as we told you, if you remember."

"I remember," said Luke: and Groves saw that he was not likely to forget it.

"You have not been made properly a member of the club," observed Groves. "But the time is come now. They have paid Frewer half-a-guinea on your account to-day . . . . Now, don't look so frightened. It is a gift. You won't have to pay it. Only, it would not be handsome if you were not to join the club immediately, you see. And you need not object; for it will be a fine thing for you.—Here, Satchell, give the lad a pint of beer."

The beershop-keeper obeyed; and Luke was informed that he need not be afraid. He would not be called on to pay for his beer to-night. He could have it at any time,—clearing off scores when his pocket chanced to be fullest.

"What am I to do about the club?" asked Luke.

"Why, the advantages are very great; and all you have to do is to be ready to go out for game when called upon,—which will never be when you are about your work, as I'll engage."

"Why, that would not do," observed Luke.

"That would not do, of course. Well: you

have only to go out, as you have done before now; and out of your share of the profits, you pay a proportion to the club, as every one else does. Then, for this, you have a perfectly safe place to lay down your game in, where nobody can touch it or you: and . . . . ”

“That is a great thing,” Luke observed.

“To be sure it is: but that is not the best yet. When you are had up before the magistrates again, which is sure to happen, you will be defended without cost to you. And if they lay you in prison, which they will do if they can, you will perhaps have only your proper term to go through, the club finding security, if you have no other.”

Luke did not exactly know what this last advantage amounted to: but he saw that, on the whole, it was a very fine chance for him,—the being admitted to this club: and he said so.

“And what are they doing now?” he asked, seeing that two or three men were consulting, and one writing.

“Why, they are taking measures to prevent the police being brought here, which would be an inconvenience to us, though they can’t interfere about the game. It is not pleasant, when we have made out which way the game-keepers are gone, any night, to be liable to be spied upon by another

set of people who, by law, have no concern with the game. I would not answer for the consequences, if the police came to trouble the people they have already put to inconvenience about their goings and comings. They had better stay away."

"Can you make them stay away? Can those men make them stay away?"

"They are trying. They can but try."

"But why should the police come here, if they can't meddle about the game?"

"They come after quite a different sort of people from us. 'Tis truly vexatious that some people should do the things that are done,—stealing, for instance. There has been a great increase of thieving here, year by year,—stealing of fowls and sheep; and wood out of the covers, and turnips and the like: and this next winter, people have a mind to keep their property safer, and so have sent for the police. And I don't blame them altogether, either. Only, 'tis hard upon us who don't do any thieving, to be spied upon by such agents: and, lest they should get a mischief, they had better not come."

"Is that what those people are writing to the police?"

"That is what those men are writing to the

police. Only, mind you this, we don't say who writes, or does or says anything here, you are aware. We let no mischief-makers belong to the club. We don't tell our grannies, or anybody."

Luke laughed and nodded, and sipped his beer. Groves then went out, saying he would be back before long ; and all must be ready.

While he was gone, Luke was very well amused. Several comrades dropped in, from one quarter of an hour to another ; and among these were some artizans from the towns. These displayed the most beautiful nets that Luke had ever seen ; and indeed they were the admiration of the whole company. It was now that the object of the night was first openly talked of. Lord B. was to have a party of friends down, in a few weeks, to shoot. They were great men who were coming,—both as to rank and sporting qualities ; and Lord B. was anxious to have a noble supply of game for them. He ought even to be provided, in case of a battue being desired, though his friends generally were sportsmen of too good an order to like battues : but one or two distinguished foreigners were to be of the party ; and their taste would have to be consulted. So Lord B. and his keepers were bestirring themselves to get up the game. The keepers spoke to Groves ; and Lord B. went to a

game-salesman in London, well known for his ability to help gentlemen in emergencies of this kind, and whose power lay in his connexion with Groves, and two or three more such men in different parts of the country. The plan was for Groves to draw the largest quantity he could from all the neighbouring preserves, except Lord B.'s, and send up to town some dead game, and a great deal alive: and the live portion would be shown to Lord B. together with more from Lincolnshire and Norfolk, which he would send down to his own estate, without having, of course, any knowledge about where it came from.

While the probabilities of supply were discussed in the poaching club, Waterston observed that it was rather a pity to send any of the game dead, when such preparations had been made for taking a quantity alive:—the live game sold so much better. But Jack Lantern the shoemaker from Stafford explained that the salesman must be considered. Good manners and consideration must be observed towards him, for the sake of all parties; and he must be prepared for the demand there would be in a day or two for netted birds. He could answer the demand for shot birds well enough; there were plenty of gentlemen and plenty of free shooters (as he was pleased to call

poachers) who would send up shot birds, from such as had only a few ruffled feathers, and one hole in wing or neck, to such as were mangled with bullets: but it was for people in clubs like the present, who had the choicest nets, to send up birds now, and hares by and by, such as were bought for my Lord Mayor and other noblemen and gentlemen;—clean and beautiful game, which pleased the eye in the shop, and would keep longer in the larder, or on the road to country friends.

Harlequin, another shoemaker, asked whether it was true that when a London alderman met with a shot, in eating his pheasant or partridge, he sent away his plate, inquired what poult er had served the game, and desired he might never be applied to again, without pardon asked, and a solemn promise to supply henceforth only netted birds.

Some thought this very probable; and one wondered how he agreed with his scrupulous brother alderman who must have partridges on the 1st of September, but warned the poult er that they must be shot that day, as he would not countenance any breach of the law.

“ How did the fellow manage ? ” asked Waterston.

“ O ! he had them up alive, a day or two before,

and rose early on the morning of the 1st of September, and hung up the birds by the legs in the passage of his house, and just took a pistol, and blew at their heads, and then said his birds were shot that morning."

"But they were too fresh for the table," objected Harlequin.

"Why," replied the narrator, "there was no particular necessity for sending those very birds, when there were some in the house just fit for the table. It was easy to forget which was which. Such as were shot that morning would serve for the alderman's country friends, you know."

Luke was laughing, the loudest of the club, at this anecdote, when Groves came in, and there was a stir, as of readiness to be off.

"Have you given the lad his name?" he asked, pointing with his thumb to Luke.

Nobody had remembered this, though, as Groves observed, he had left them nothing else to do, and they might have thought of that one thing.

"My name is Luke Voile," observed Luke.

"No, lad, 'tis not, though I believe we have all heard say so pretty often. Your name is no such thing."

"'Tis Goose, I take it," said one.

“ Quite the reverse ; 'tis Solomon, depend upon it,” said another.

“ I am of opinion 'tis Prince Albert,” declared a third.

“ Come,—no play now !” said Groves. “ Really, boys, you should have saved me this outlay of my intellect, and given him a name. Let's see. It must be something tickling, and so, easy to remember ; while, at the same time, it must be one that will pass easily over a magistrate's ear, and in a court of justice.”

“ He's a hulking fellow,” observed one, as Luke at the moment shook the floor with his tread. “ Why don't you call him Lightfoot ? I knew a man of that name.”

“ That will do,” said Groves. “ And Mark stands next to Luke, if I be right in my learning. So he is Mark Lightfoot. Mind you, lad, keep your ears open to that name, and hear no other in the night time. You've plenty of time in the day to answer to Luke.—Now, Mark Lightfoot and all of you, down with your beer, and up with your rattle traps, and follow me.”

Luke was rather perplexed about his new name ; but he began to have some glimmering notion of a reason for some of the odd names owned by not a few of the members of the club. Jack Lantern

had passed without much notice ; and Luke had not happened ever to hear of Harlequin ; but the Great Unknown seemed to him a curious name ; and so did Tell-tale and Bonaparte,—the last being a name of fear to him from his babyhood, when he was told that that personage would come and pull his nose if he did not go to sleep when he was bid.

There was great success this night. Groves had chosen his time with his usual discretion. The watchers in their round had just left the first cover to look into another, and be back in half an hour. The poaching party followed almost immediately on their track, set their apparatus, tapped the trees at one end, to drive the birds to the other, and stripped the cover in half an hour. They were off with their sacks, and all was quiet on the return of the watchers, who were far from immediately suspecting that there was not a bird left to flutter among the trees.

The poachers next repaired in several parties to some fields in a different direction, there to wait till the game should come to feed at daylight.

A field of standing barley was found to be a favourite resort ; and in the dawn the nets were laid, and a great booty secured. Luke was one of

the beaters at first; but he had a hand on the net when a whisper went round that the watchers were coming. Everybody knew better than Luke what to do in such a case. Groves, and one or two old poachers besides, had not entered the field at all. They had avoided the sin of trespass by remaining in the lane, while they sent into the field men whose safety was less important. For the same reason, Groves had not touched the nets. He was willing to carry the dead game at all times, night or day, on the roads, when the season had once begun: and he would even stop when he met a keeper, and call on him to admire the weight of a hare,—safe in the protection of the certificate which authorized him to possess and sell game.— The men in the lane now disappeared in a trice; and their party proceeded to disperse, as quickly and quietly as possible, according to Groves's standing instructions, which were to make no resistance, hurt nobody,—even to carry no sticks; but get away without mischief.—Luke was the last. Not sure which way to go, he stood in the middle of the field, gazing round him to see what the others would do. At last, he ran to a gap in the hedge, and jumped into the road, almost upon the shoulders of two of Mr. Treherne's watchers, who laughed and asked him if his name was

not Luke Voile. He replied that he was Mark Lightfoot ; and had some hope that by this piece of cleverness he had saved himself ; but he was soon undeceived. He was clapped on the shoulder as he went to his work, after breakfast, and was told by the constable that the warrant was all right this time ; that there were people who swore that they were afraid he would abscond ; and so he was taken by warrant, and would be locked up till the next quarter sessions.

That it should be the next quarter sessions was determined by the magistrates after much consideration. The question was whether the offence came under the Night Poaching Act. The witnesses had not looked at their watches, at the time of seeing the poachers in the field. One thought it was less than an hour before sunrise ; the other two were confident that it was more than an hour before sunrise. The testimony of the majority was taken ; and Luke was kept for trial at the quarter sessions.

Here was an end of Mr. Frewer's plan of bringing an action for Luke's false imprisonment, two days before, on the ground of the illegality of arresting him by warrant, when it did not appear in the information that there was any apprehension of his absconding. Nor could the dismissal of

Pole be insisted upon with any grace, now that the injured Luke was so immediately found sinning in the way alleged. The magistrate and Pole had got out of a scrape by Luke's getting into one.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE WAY TO CHURCH.

Most potentates feel and testify their consequence eminently on the religious days of the society they dwell in. Sunday is the day in England when all great judicial persons look very grand, going to church. Mr. Treherne, though only a justice of the peace, had his sort of importance on Sundays,—his awe-striking way of going to church. In fair weather, he went on horseback; and he prepared for the offices of the pastor among the people by inculcating religion and morality all the way as he rode.

On the Sunday morning after the last poaching expedition, he made a circuit by his keeper's lodge, to put Lisamer on the scent of another member of the beerhouse club. As he and his two companions (for he had guests always in September) came near the lodge, they heard from within the voice of a man in high passion, rating and swearing at some one.

“Who the devil have they got here?” said Mr. Treherne.

“Somebody in a vast rage,” observed Sir Francis Gray.

At the moment, Mrs. Lisamer came out to open the gate for the gentlemen. She was trembling so that she could scarcely hold her baby; and her eyes were very red.

“Who the devil is holding forth in that style?” asked Mr. Treherne. “No brother of yours, I hope.”

Mrs. Lisamer did not answer. At that moment, Lisamer came out for his orders. His face was white, and his lips quivered.

“If that was you that we heard, Lisamer, I don’t know you yet, I perceive. I should have said you were as quiet a man as could be found in the parish, and as affectionate a husband as any body.”

“So he is indeed, Sir,” said the wife.

“Then it was not you that he was rating? Well; I am glad of that much.”

Both husband and wife looked down. Then Lisamer said—

“I will not deceive you, Sir. I own I did lose my temper, and without cause, as far as she is concerned. But . . . .”

“It is the first time, indeed, Sir,” said the now

weeping wife. "He has had much to vex him lately, and . . . ."

"Pooh! pooh! We all have things to vex us; but we don't make scandal on Sunday mornings with them. I can't hear of my servants having vexations. Remember that, Lisamer."

Lisamer bowed,—not much comforted that his master was not to hear what was undergone in his service.

"Look well to the Sabbath-breakers," was Mr. Treherne's parting charge to his keeper. "Let them be aware that my eye is upon them."

The party next passed the allotments; and Mr. Treherne pointed out granny Stott's, where Job was watching against the game.

"You see there," said the moralist, "how vice begins. I always said that Sabbath-breaking was the first stage; and I always find myself right. We shall see that little fellow as bad as his brother, by and by. The brother is a confirmed poacher, before he is twenty; and a ripened villain he will be before he is five years older. He is now awaiting his trial for night-poaching before next Quarter Sessions. The old woman has much to answer for in keeping them away from church on a Sunday morning, as you see. From watching the game on her bit of ground, their ideas soon extend

to taking it in our covers. Lisamer has a troublesome watch on a Sunday morning. It is no day of rest to him."

"I would send him to church, and let the game take its chance," said Sir Francis.

"We do not exactly pay keepers to neglect our game at the most critical hours," observed Mr. Treherne: "and I could not reconcile it to myself to permit such facilities to the scoundrels among my neighbours.—Look at that little fellow,—with the propensity in him already.—Holloa there! Why are you not at church, boy?"

"Granny 's gone,—and Bell."

"Well; what of that? Their going won't save your soul, will it?"

"I don't know," said Job. "Granny bad me stay here."

"Then you may tell granny I am shocked at her. Do you know where Luke is? He is in prison: and you will go to a worse place still if you don't go to church on Sundays."

Job whimpered and repeated,

"Granny bad me stay here."

They next overtook a labourer who had not appeared to his engagement as watcher, one night this week. Mr. Treherne rode up beside him in a very terrifying way, and taxed him with his

breach of faith. The man took off his remnant of a hat, and humbly answered that his wife was so ill that night, he could not leave her.

“ You made that excuse before ; and I told you then that you were bound to send somebody in your place.—Don’t talk to me, but hear what I have to say. You never obey orders, I perceive. You take your own way, according to your own pleasure ; and that won’t do with me. You . . . .”

Here the man seemed disposed to walk on, instead of waiting for further scolding :—his censor saw a look of amusement, perhaps, in his companions’ countenances ; and a passing breeze brought the sound of the church-bell.

“ Don’t suppose,” said Mr. Treherne, raising his voice as the man walked away,—“ don’t suppose I am forgetting it is Sunday, as so many of my neighbours do. Not I ! I am wondering that God Almighty could be pleased to make such a plaguy disobedient fellow as you are.”

His next subject was farmer Onslow, who was driving his two daughters to church in his gig. He touched his hat in passing ; but he was not allowed to escape so.

“ So you have lost a labourer this last week, Onslow. Have you found any one far enough gone in crime to take his place ? ”

“I took him on for his own sake, to prevent his going further in crime,” replied Mr. Onslow. “I shall do the same thing again when the poor fellow is next in want of honest work.”

“Upon my soul, that is an open avowal.”

Sir Francis and his companion, Mr. Butler, laughed.

“To be sure it is,” replied Mr. Onslow. “I have always avowed, and always shall, that the only chance for a young poacher is to give him honest work. The chance is but a poor one, in a game country like this; but, being the only one, I am anxious to afford it where I can.”

“The morals of the people have a poor chance,” said Mr. Treherne, “when a farmer avows on a Sunday morning that he prefers criminals to honest men, and watches the jails to catch them as they come out.”

“Ay, indeed? Have you found a farmer to say so?”

“Why, you stated that, just now.”

“I said nothing of the sort, Mr. Treherne.”

“You farmers who connive at vice are the greatest enemies of the poor, however you may cant about doing them good. I wish you went to church to better purpose. On your very road to the church, you tell me that your sympathies

are with poachers, and that you will back them against the country gentlemen."

"I said nothing of the sort, Mr. Treherne."

"The country gentlemen are not blind to the drift of complaining farmers. It is the cue of the farmers to lay to the account of the game any damage to their crops arising from any cause,—from the atmosphere or insects, or vermin; and then they engage the labourers on their side against the game-preservers, who are the best friends of rural society."

"They must be a curious sort of farmers,—those you are speaking of," said Mr. Onslow, smiling. "I should like to come across one, some day, to see what one could make of him."

"If you happen to have a looking-glass at home, you can see one any day."

"Come, come, Mr. Treherne, this is going too far. You have not heard me complain of the game on my farm yet, whatever you may do. I am a quiet man, making no difficulties among my neighbours, but helping them to respectability in the best way I can. When the country gentlemen have a wish to do the same, and begin to think of the welfare of their neighbours first, and their own pleasures in the second place, it will be a great day for rural society. Till then, it is

my opinion that the less they say about the morals of the people, the better for themselves."

"I do not see how your opinion can be of any consequence to anybody; but, as you think yourself so very wise a person, I am anxious to know how you suppose you can understand anything of the pleasures of gentlemen. You were once behind the plough, I think; and your ideas range between the barn and the market-table."

"I began life behind the plough, as you say; and, as you say, my interest is now mainly in my business,—of farming."

"And it could not be better placed, in my opinion," observed Sir Francis. "Sportsmen's pleasures are all very well as far as they go; and no one relishes them more than I do.—And you have that relish too, Mr. Onslow? I am glad to hear it. But I, for one, should be ashamed to bring them for a single moment into any comparison, in point of importance, with the serious and most honorable business of agriculture."

"That is my view," said Mr. Onslow, "though no man likes a day's sport now and then better than I do."

"You call yourself a better farmer than any of us," Mr. Treherne began.

Farmer Onslow laughed; and his daughters now ventured to do so too.

"Since you are so very wise," continued Mr. Treherne, "you know perhaps what a crow is."

"I do."

"Do you know such a bird as a magpie?"

"I do."

"And a wood-pigeon?"

"I do."

"You know what a rat is?"

"Yes."

"And the wire-worm?"

"Yes."

"And don't you know that the farmers charge upon the game the mischief done by these creatures, to excite a feeling against the country gentlemen, and induce the poor to poach?"

"No."

"You mean to say that this is not true?"

"I mean to say that I do not know it to be true. I never heard of such a thing before."

"O! then, your knowledge is but limited, after all."

"My knowledge has its limits. But from what I have learned this morning, I should suppose the country gentlemen the most discontented and discomposed party concerned."

Mr. Treherne here saw granny Stott on the causeway, with two grand-children ; and he had a word to say to her. Old as she was, he took the chance of improving her morals. Farmer Onslow drove on, after returning the courteous bows of the other two gentlemen.

Granny Stott had her ideas about Sunday morning too ; and in order to keep her tongue under management, pretended to the last moment not to hear that anybody addressed her. When compelled to admit that she was spoken to, she did it very amply, and gave Mr. Treherne some notion, in his turn, of a preparatory sermon, before entering church.

“ Go you home, Sir, and teach your beasts and birds to respect the sabbath, and not devour the poor widow’s substance, and then I’ll hear what you have to say to me and my grand-children. Of all the sabbath-breakers I ever heard of, you are the worst, Mr. Treherne. It used to be thought that old age was a sort of sabbath to be protected ;—that old people’s minds were not to be broken up with cruel cares and wrongs : and your church-going will reckon for little, Mr. Treherne, when you are called to account in your turn for the boys that are depraved, and the young men ruined, and the families brought

down to the parish for your pleasures, and your sales of the game . . . .”

“Conceive the impudence of this!” said Mr. Treherne to his companions. “*My* selling my game!”

“So many do,” observed Sir Francis, “that an old woman cannot be expected to know who does not.—What is that she is saying about Sinbad and dragons?”

“O! she is a learned lady. She says she used to read about devouring monsters:—that is my hares, I suppose.”

“If,” said the old woman, “such monsters could come in church-time and carry off all your woods, and devour all your crops, and leave you nothing but a broken thatch to lie under, and no food but inside the workhouse door; and if leaving one of your family at home would keep off the monsters, do you think you would shut up house, and go all to church, and come home to find your place laid waste? Not you! And I’ll be bound there is somebody at home there now, cooking you more meat for your dinner than these children here ever saw in their whole lives. And I’ll be bound there is somebody left to watch the game . . . .”

“To watch against sabbath-breakers, reared by such as you, dame.”

"Shall we ride on?" said Sir Francis.

Granny's voice followed them for some way, so loud that the church-goers on the causeway turned and looked from the laughing Mr. Treherne to the angry old dame, whose last audible words were about an avenging angel and one being fed by ravens.

"The old lady is poetical and learned this morning," observed Mr. Treherne. "Sinbad and monsters and angels and Elijah's raven!"

"She is highly excited," observed Sir Francis.

"That is undeniable. But the insolence of the people here is beyond everything. Is not her impudence insufferable?"

"Why, I don't know," replied Sir Francis.

"It is very amusing," observed Mr. Butler.

"Why, I don't know," again replied Sir Francis.

"Look at that pair," said Mr. Treherne, pointing with his whip to a corner of the churchyard where Mr. Frewer and Groves were in earnest conversation under the limes. "There is the old poacher, consulting with the poachers' lawyer how to get off the young fellow we have placed in the hands of justice. They might have chosen some other than a sacred place for their criminal plottings. They will come into church now, looking

as easy in their minds as if they had been reading their Bibles ever since breakfast."

It was a fine day;—an autumnal Sunday to draw all abroad, and to light up the very devotions of those who came to worship and to learn holy things. The sunshine streamed in upon a pillar and a monument here and there within the church, and flecked the floor, as the trees of the churchyard waved gently in the mild breeze. The church was well filled. Mr. Sleath stood up, and leaned over the door of his pew, almost all the time, to see that the poor behaved properly. Mr. Treherne took the lead in morals, as usual, and made the responses very loud, and looked out the text, and handed it to his guests.

Epistle of James. Chapter ii., v. 6 and 7. "But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by which ye are called?"

But, whether it was that Mr. Treherne's habitude of active exercises rendered him unable to sustain quiet listening, or that even his morality was exhausted by the large expenditure of it which he had made this morning, he now broke down as an exemplar. He laid up his legs and

slept ; and when, at one part of the sermon about judgment seats, granny Stott stood up in the aisle, and nodded her old black bonnet vehemently at Mr. Treherne, nobody in church was so unconscious of the occurrence as himself.

It was only one as deeply interested as granny Stott, however, who could have made so direct an application of the discourse.—Mr. Holloway told how, in the early days of the Christian church, the Christian name was abused by some unworthy members, who lost sight of the golden rule, and of the essential character of the gospel faith ; and, after a good deal of learned detail about this, he went forward to the judgment-day, when our Lord would declare to such that they were not his,—that he never knew them ;—that they had taken his name in vain,—blasphemed the worthy name by which they were called.

“A very interesting sermon,” observed Mr. Butler to Mr. Treherne.

“Holloway is an excellent preacher,” he replied ; “and a fine scholar.”

“A very interesting sermon indeed,” repeated Mr. Butler, turning to Sir Francis.

“As far as it went,” Sir Francis agreed. “But it seemed to me there was some deficiency. Did not it strike you so ?”

“ How do you mean ? ”

“ He told us much that was interesting and valuable in relation to his subject, eighteen centuries ago; and warned us of its remote but infallible consequences hereafter. But there was nothing about how we ourselves are concerned in the matter now.”

“ You are right,” decided Mr. Treherne. “ He should consider the sort of people he preaches to,” nodding to the poor in the aisle. “ They are so ignorant, they cannot be expected to carry their minds out of the present: and Holloway should consider that, and make his sermons practical; or some part of them at least. That is what you mean ? ”

“ Not exactly. I was not thinking of the people in the aisle at the moment. We are in a place which has always seemed to me unlike every other in this ;—that elsewhere we are bound to consider the affairs of everybody around us before our own. Here our own state is our sole concern. So, I was not thinking of the people in the aisle, but of myself.”

“ That is a candid avowal,” said Mr. Treherne, smiling. “ So you make out church the only place where one need not care for one’s neighbours.”

“ You mistake me, Treherne.”

“ Well, never mind now. We agree at bottom, I have no doubt.—Come with me, and I will introduce you to Holloway. He goes out with us to-morrow. And I will see if he cannot dine with us to-day. You will like him, I am sure. He has some soft notions; but one does not object to them in a clergyman: and he is a fine scholar.”

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CHURCHYARD.

GROVES and Mr. Frewer were talking over the cases of the members of the poaching-club who had got into scrapes. These were three. Jack Lantern had been seen and identified at the same moment with Luke, in the next field, by a different watcher, who declared the time to be within a quarter of an hour of sunrise; so that this case had come before the Petty Sessions, and Jack Lantern was already in jail, undergoing his sentence of two months.

Luke's case was brought under the Night-poaching Act by the oath of the witnesses about the time; and his trial was to be at the October Quarter Sessions.—Waterston was the third. He had, on the next Sunday morning, gone out with a gun, to take a little game on his own account: and he was in prison too.

“I don't see that anybody can help him,” observed Groves. “That was a selfish affair; and

I don't see but Waterston must bear the consequences. What form did the information take? Did it allege the shooting on Sunday, or the trespass in pursuit of game, or the killing game without a certificate?"

"They went into evidence on all the points: but he was committed on the trespass charge."

"And is that the last he will hear of it?"

"There is no knowing till his two months are up. They will press him hard, to judge by their way of conducting the matter:—that is, by Mr. Sleath's. I wish some attention could be drawn to that man's way of conducting himself in these cases. When he sits alone, or with any other than Mr. Holloway, I know there is no chance of fair play,—to say nothing of mercy."

"Then you let matters go, in this case?"

"I advised Waterston to say nothing, of course; and I meant to say little myself, but to appeal."

"Well, will you appeal?"

"Why, there is really no use in it. Sleath is exactly the man to take care that the prisoner is removed to jail in such a way as that the appeal cannot be managed within the three days. And then, you appeal only to the same men that you could not get justice from in Petty Sessions.

It would not answer. Why, the clerk himself observed that an appeal was rather unusual ; and I never heard of an appeal succeeding, or could meet with any one that had."

" You don't want to get the ill-will of the magistrates ; that's it," decided Groves.

" Of course, I am not fond of getting anybody's ill-will : but I should have disregarded that, if I had really hoped to upset the conviction. But I should have merely spent the man's money to no purpose. These game convictions never are upset."

" On what ground would you have objected to this ?"

" O ! the whole conduct of it was as bad as possible : and old Tilney let Sleath take his own way about it, from beginning to end. He never once checked him, but agreed in everything."

" Ah ! the old gentleman is past his work. It is time he was out at grass for the rest of his days."

" Sleath asked the witness leading questions all the way through. He began with a direct question whether he saw Waterston trespassing in pursuit of game."

" And then the man said 'yes,' of course."

" Of course : and that was considered settled. Not a word about where he was exactly, and

what he was doing, and how the witness knew he was beating for game! And so it went on, all through.—Now, you and I know well enough how the matter was, with Waterston in the case: but next time it may be some entirely innocent person,—perhaps an involuntary trespasser; or one guilty of mere trespass, without a thought of the game. So I said what I thought of the illegality of that way of taking evidence,—which made it indeed no evidence at all.”

“ And what did you get by it?”

“ O ! you know well enough, if you know Sleath. Nothing but insult. If I were on the other side,—if I were employed in prosecution, and not so much in defence, in these game cases, I would try to get the attention of the Secretary of State fixed on such abuses of the law as a man like Sleath may perpetrate. If a poor man leaves the path in a field, and is seen on the grass, or near the hedge, he may be ruined, for all we can do to help him. A man, in malice or mere folly, may swear a ‘yes’ to a magistrate’s leading questions,—may declare the poor fellow to have been beating for game: and, with a magistrate for a prosecutor, that magistrate’s keeper for informer, and the under-keeper the only witness, what chance can the prisoner have ? ”

“ Very true :—and all which is highly favorable to the game-salesman’s trade. If men are to be in jeopardy at all events, they will get what they can by it.”

“ Of course. But the matter does not end in game cases. When people once learn to distrust and despise law and justice, they do not stop at poaching. And that is a thing worth the consideration of the Secretary of State.”

“ Very true. And so, Mr. Frewer, if we see you some day on the other side, prosecuting us as often as you can catch us, we may understand that it is all in kindness to us ; all for the sake of your being able to call the attention of the Secretary of State to our hardships.”

“ I shall have to remind you, Groves, as I did Mr. Sleath, that professional men take no sides. We have only to do, to the best of our power, the business that comes to our hands.”

“ I know all that, Mr. Frewer. Well : what did Sleath do next ? ”

“ Why, I threatened an appeal,—partly because the case was so conducted that it put my spirit up ; and partly to see what Sleath would do. He would not give me a copy of the conviction.”

“ Do you mean that he refused it ? ”

“ First, he put it off. I have since been over

four times to get a copy of the conviction ; and they have refused it each time. If I had gone on with the appeal, they would have kept the conviction out of my hands till it was read in the court at Quarter Sessions. Their clerk let me understand as much."

"We poachers are not the only people, you may tell them, that love darkness rather than light, because of the evil of our deeds,—a saying they are fond of bringing up against us. In my opinion, it is worse to deny or prevent justice than to . . . ."

"Now don't talk to me, Groves, about taking wild birds and hares being no sin. You know it is a sin in my eyes and yours, because we understand the law and the rights of property."

"Ay ! you and I. But I was alluding to poor fellows who have not our learning on that head.—But now, could not you compel these men to give you a copy of the conviction ?"

"Yes, by going to the Court of Queen's Bench. But who is to pay the costs ?"

"Ay ! there's the rub. So you yield in this case. We'll keep our eye on Sleath, however. He is what I call an immoral neighbour ; and we must make an example of him, when we can catch

him. : You need not shake your head about whether he will suffer in his game or not. That is my affair, not yours. There, there ! I know all you have to say about that. We'll suppose that discussed and settled. Only do you catch that man tripping as a magistrate :—get him a reprimand from the Secretary of State, and a gentle hint about dismissal from the bench, and we'll make every man, woman and child within thirty miles acquainted with the fact, so that he shall hear of it in all his rides. Lord ! how the little man will fidget his horse, and scold his groom ! And how Mrs. Sleath will catch it when he comes home ! Now, keep your eyes open with that object, pray do, Mr. Frewer.—Next, what is to be done about Voile ? ”

“ Nothing, but just the best we can at the time. ’Tis too clear a case for anything to be done. The only doubtful point is about the time. Judging by Jack Lantern’s—What is that man’s real name ? ”

“ Bond. Ay ! they make his out a day case, you see.”

“ Yes : and I think it likely that it really was within an hour of sunrise. But they swear positively on the other side ; and we have no evidence to rebut that.”

"There's the worst of these cases. We cannot bring witnesses ; and very hard that is."

"Not at all hard, Groves, and you know it. What would you think of a burglar who should complain of the hardship of having no witness as to the hour when he came out of the butler's pantry, in a gentleman's house ? "

Groves laughed.

" You are burlesquing what I said," continued Mr. Frewer, " about the hardship of a labourer having no witness as to what he was doing in walking across a field to his work or his dinner, when any game-keeper chooses to swear that he was beating for game. You know as well as I do that there is no likeness between such a case and that of Voile, seen to be drawing a field of barley before sunrise."

Groves laughed again.

" I am not so easily amused as you, Groves. I could not laugh at Voile and his case if, as I suspect . . . . "

"Come now, Mr. Frewer, why should you trouble yourself to suspect, and to afflict your mind for the lad ? He will do very well, when he gets a little more experience, and a little quicker spirit. And he is learning ;—I will say that for him. He is by no means so childlike as when

he first came out of his granny's hands into mine. I'm kind to him, you see; and there's nothing like kindness for bringing out a lad's spirit."

"Very kind! to get him to prison!"

"Well; you may mock at me: but I really think it is. He will be in no way the worse. His character will not suffer, as you know, as he is in for no thieving or crime of any sort. And he will have time to think and to learn; and that will sharpen his wits. And he will lie there warm through the winter . . . ."

"Then you will not be security for him?"

"I shall see about that, when his three months are up. If we want him, it may be that I will go and get him out. But I rather think not so soon. The season will be nearly over when his term is up: and then he may as well lie at the cost of the county till the egg-season . . . ."

"Now, Groves, don't lodge your unlawful plans with me. I hear enough of your doings against my will. Don't try to make me an accomplice."

"As you please, Mr. Frewer. I can only say that some gentlemen of very good taste,—some noblemen and members of parliament, and county magistrates,—like to hear from me what you are above listening to.—But, in fact, 'tis time we were

showing ourselves in church. Mr. Treherne and his friends went in two minutes since."

"You—you go to church, Groves!"

"I may have my motives, and good motives too, Mr. Frewer, as well as another man. I go out of kindness to more parties than one. Mr. Treherne is uneasy about Sabbath-breaking: and it must tend to relieve his mind to see me in church of a Sunday, conscious as he is that I am an example to my class,—a sort of head among the people here. And it gives me a sort of weight with the people themselves,—shows that I carry an easy mind, and think no harm of our little transactions together.—So, I consider it far from being lost time,—to say nothing of the leisure for thinking. Many a transaction have I planned there, while everybody has supposed me to be just thinking of nothing."

"Nobody ever supposed that of you, Groves, depend upon it."

And they moved towards the church, Groves waiting behind till Mr. Frewer had entered his pew, for Mr. Frewer's sake: for Groves piqued himself on his consideration for the feelings and respectability of his acquaintance.

It was perhaps from such considerations that he staid away from Luke's trial at the Quarter

Sessions. It might have been as well to send some message or token to the poor lad whom he had brought to this pass. But Groves said to himself that it would be more to the advantage of all parties to keep any pleasant news to be imparted at its own time. Let the three months at the tread-wheel pass : and then, when the lad had no other expectation than of being detained for six months longer, for want of securities for his good behaviour,—(and how could a poor lad like Luke expect to get such securities, even if he were as innocent as the child unborn?)—then would come the fine news, some day, that Groves had found security for him ; and his joy and gratitude would be a benefit to his club and their head ; for he would be all the more alert in their work. That work he must do, to pay the expenses incurred for him : and it would be as well to have it done with the spirit and alacrity inspired by an unexpected release from prison. A little previous dismay and disappointment would enhance the pleasure and obedience at last, and need not therefore be grudged. So Luke was tried, convicted, sentenced, and carried to jail, while his employer was silently preparing all this good for him, for a future time.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE DINING-ROOM.

AFTER administering justice at the Quarter Sessions, several of the magistrates, and a good many other gentlemen, adjourned to Lord B.'s, and to other houses in the neighbourhood, for the battue which had been long talked of. There were four days of it; and the foreign prince for whom it was got up attended punctually at all. On the three first days there were great dinners at Lord B.'s: on the fourth, the prince departed before dinner; and the squires themselves were glad to repose from fatigue and form at once, by taking their wine quietly, by fours and sixes, at one another's houses. At Mr. Treherne's, there were but three guests,—Sir Francis Gray, Mr. Holloway and Mr. Sleath; and they talked on, over their wine and walnuts, with a pleasant sense of leisure and freedom.

“A very agreeable battue!” observed Mr. Sleath, whose face was shining with gratified

vanity, exercise and wine. “A delightful time we have had of it; and I am sure the prince thought so. I hope it will not be the last. Mr. Treherne, it will be your turn next. You will give us the opportunity of showing some illustrious stranger what we can do.”

“Not I. I do not relish a battue. I do not think it was an agreeable affair at all.”

“I heard the prince express to Lord B. his high gratification and enjoyment: and then Lord B. said he hoped it would not be the last.”

“Lord B. had better ask the neighbouring gentlemen how they like this proceeding of his, before he gives the prince another such invitation. Gentlemen do not like to be robbed of their game for any prince on earth.”

“You do not mean literally robbed,” said Mr. Holloway. “You do not experience foul play, I hope.”

“Fair or foul, our covers are stripped. There is nothing left, Lisamer tells me, worth my asking any friend to come for.”

“But rival game-keepers make the worst of things,” said Sir Francis. “If we take our guns next week, in a quiet way, when the preserves have been left in peace a few days, perhaps we may find there is some sport left.”

"Well, Lisamer is a dismal fellow, I own. He is always full of complaints. I will try a new tone with him. My being peremptory may put a little spirit into him. He looked very like a man at a funeral this morning, certainly. Did you observe him, Sir Francis?"

"I observed nobody," observed Sir Francis. "I came away very soon, feeling, not exactly like a man at a funeral, but like being in the shambles. They were blowing the birds and hares to pieces quite enough without me, so I stole away."

"There were five guns to each bird," observed Mr. Sleath. "Five guns to each bird!" he repeated, with a full sense of the grandeur of the proportions he spoke of. "Fifteen guns in the whole, I heard; and five guns, on the average, to each bird. And fifteen hundred hares shot, and . . . ."

"Fifteen hundred!" repeated Mr. Treherne, contemptuously. "That is the way people talk after these battues."

"It was so, I assure you. The markers said so. And I heard the farmers muttering about it, saucy fellows! They were very well pleased, and were talking about their turnips,—that the slaughter was in time to save their turnips. To talk of turnips within the hearing of gentlemen

at their sport! I turned round upon them, and damned their turnips. ‘Damn your turnips!’ said I.”

“And what did they answer?” asked the clergyman.

“O! they laughed, of course: and one impudent fellow said I was rather too late. Last year was the time for damning the turnips: this year they hoped to save them.”

“Fifteen hundred hares must have been rather damaging to the crops: we may excuse a little glee,” observed Sir Francis.

“That is all nonsense about there being fifteen hundred,” declared Mr. Treherne. “The fact is, every one of the fifteen guns had his servant behind him; and every one of the five marked down the hare or the bird to his master, when it fell. Say four or five hundred, and you will be nearer the mark.”

Mr. Sleath fortified himself by a pinch of snuff, and then observed that it was possible Mr. Treherne might be mistaken . . . .

“No; it is not possible that I should be mistaken,” declared Mr. Treherne. “I have spent my life in sporting; and the opinion of those who have spent their lives in a very different way . . . .”

“Pardon me, Sir,” exclaimed Mr. Sleath, who dreaded nothing so much as allusions to his having been in the iron-trade. “Pardon me, Mr. Treherne: I have authority for what I say. The game-salesman with whom Lord B. deals . . .”

“You mean Lord B.’s keeper. Gentlemen do not sell their game.”

“Hear me out, pray, Mr. Treherne. This salesman made his bargain with Lord B. himself: the bargain was two shillings a head for the hares. The man was liberal in the first instance, on account of the advantage of the connexion: but he says it is quite another thing from what he expected. He has to pay two shillings a head for these fifteen hundred hares, Sir, I repeat; and he is obliged to pack the greater part of them off to London, where he will not get on the average a shilling apiece, considering the expenses.”

Mr. Sleath took snuff, and fixed his fiery black eyes on Mr. Treherne.

“I don’t doubt your having been told this story,” said Mr. Treherne, carelessly. “But if you were really a country gentleman, you would know that it cannot be true,—you would see that Lord B.’s keeper has been playing off the salesman. Gentlemen do not sell their game.”

Again Mr. Sleath took snuff; for he not only sold his game, but was aware that the gentlemen present knew that he did.

“Now, Treherne, you are mistaken, as I can aver,” said Mr. Holloway. “Lord B. does sell his game. What I wonder at is any man’s making a secret of it. Why should not any man say, ‘My preserves are a great expense to me. I do not think it right to spend more than a certain amount per annum on my game; and yet I like to have sport to offer to my friends. So I make my game pay itself to a certain extent’? Why should any gentleman hesitate to say this?”

“Because, in that case, he is not a gentleman but a tradesman.”

“He must consider himself a tradesman so far as to be careful of commercial honour,—so far, for instance, as not to sell at two shillings a head hares that are blown to pieces by four or five guns: but, as to the mere selling, why not sell his game as well as his timber or his crops?”

“Ah! why indeed?” Mr. Sleath ventured to put in. “Parliament legalized the sale of game in 1830 for the very purpose.”

“A vulgar act is not made gentlemanly by Act of Parliament,” said Mr. Treherne. “Men who sold game before that Act will sell it now; and

men who were above being game-salesmen before will be above it now. The feeling of sportsmen, —real gentlemen,—is against it; and that feeling will prevail against all law and reasoning with country gentlemen generally."

"When new preserves want stocking, where does the game come from?" asked Mr. Holloway; "the live leverets, and the pheasant poult, when they get to the size of chickens, and the eggs:—where do these come from?"

"All poached, I dare say."

"Do not you think a gentleman has something to answer for who will not supply in a legal way what must otherwise be got by poaching?"

"I might make that one exception. If a man came to me, and appealed to me to let him have a hundred live hares, and a hundred live pheasants, the day after the season, I might . . . . No, I would not myself sell him any, but I might direct him to somebody who had not my feeling about it."

"Pray send him to me," said Sir Francis.

"Or to me," said Mr. Sleath, settling his collar, and looking very brave.

Mr. Treherne nodded to him, as much as to say, "You are the proper person."

"I can tell you this," said Mr. Sleath. "Gentle-

men,—men of very gentlemanly feeling are obliged to come to a full understanding with the salesmen in this way,—for pure self-defence. A salesman applies to a nobleman, we will say, and offers a price for the game,—a good price, but on condition of a certain amount being netted,—because netted game has always the preference in the market. The nobleman objects, and prefers sending up his surplus to London himself. Well: the salesman says, ‘I must have this game: my customers insist upon it:—if my lord will not consider me so far, I really can’t undertake to consider him. I must take what offers, and ask no questions about where it comes from.’ Then, you see, ensues poaching: and my lord is robbed of what he declined to sell, and much more. This is how it comes about that country gentlemen permit their licensed dealers to have netted game.”

“ Some alive and some dead?” asked Mr. Holloway.

“ Some alive and some dead, Sir,” Mr. Sleath averred.

“ Pray, Sleath,” said Mr. Treherne, “ as you have so much more of this tradesman’s learning than any of us . . . .”

“ I put in ‘for my share of the compliment,’ ”

said Mr. Holloway. "I declare I have told you some things you did not know before."

"Not to compare with Sleath. Pray, Sleath, as you have so much knowledge and experience of all this higgling, tell us how it is that the live game is not taken and sold half-a-dozen times over."

"I can tell you something about that," said Sir Francis. "I happen to know of a few baskets of live game that were on their travels, again and again, in the most ridiculous way. They stocked three or four preserves before they were settled: but that was because a sly old salesman was let into the matter too far. He was connected with poaching gangs in various parts of the country; and he let them know."

"The salesman should never know where the live game is going," observed Mr. Sleath. "And in fact I would give my confidence only to one who refused to know. But, as all salesmen have not that sort of honour, the better way is to have recourse to some little arrangement;—to make an appointment somewhere on the road, and have a man meet your salesman with a dog-cart; a man that you can trust, and who will not budge till the fellow is fairly out of sight.—Some noblemen borrow a friend's dog-cart and servant, to avoid dangerous recognition; and . . . ."

“ Noblemen !” repeated Mr. Treherne, contemptuously.

“ Come, Treherne, don’t be affected,” said Mr. Holloway. “ Who would look for affectation in you ? You know, as well as we do, that of the preserves stocked in this way, most belong to noblemen. As old Groves says, when asked his opinion where all the live game and eggs go to, ‘ why, they pretty well all go to noblemen.’ Then, he proceeds to tell that M. P.s,—the enactors of the laws against poaching, buy their share.”

“ And clergymen too, I dare say he tells you, if you choose to believe him.”

“ Yes,—and clergymen, I am sorry to say. And I do believe old Groves about it, because these thefts certainly are committed,—new preserves certainly are stocked, and old ones double-stocked,—and the purchasers cannot be poor men. They are the rich and educated who are the patrons of this kind of poaching.”

“ Ah ! clergy, depend upon it,” said Mr. Treherne. “ I have a great respect for you, Holloway ; and I make a point of upholding the clergy, on all occasions, to the utmost ; but, upon my soul, if one meets with a shabby transaction anywhere, one may be sure there is a clergyman at the bottom of it.”

"You mean sporting transactions, I suppose," said Sir Francis: "not every kind of transaction."

"We are talking of sporting transactions," replied Mr. Treherne. "What I mean is that there are so many among the clergy who are of low origin,—not well born,—not gentlemen from their cradles, like Holloway here. They cannot play the country gentleman. If they ape the country gentleman, it makes one's gorge rise: and if they do not, they are sure to perpetrate one shabby trick or another."

"They should keep to the towns," observed Mr. Sleath; "and noblemen and gentlemen should take care how they give away livings in a sporting country to men who do not know how to use such an advantage. Noblemen and gentlemen are too apt to be remiss in that matter."

"Well; they soon get punished for their carelessness," observed Mr. Treherne. "A pretty piece of ingratitude the duke of B. has met with from the incumbent of the parish,—the man that he himself presented to the benefice. The fellow has actually let a long slip of shooting, running along the duke's preserves,—let it to two or three young men for five pounds a year. Did you hear of that, Sir Francis?"

"Yes."

“ Did you ever hear a worse case of ingratitude ? ”

“ It looks like bad manners, certainly. But I have not heard the other side. I don’t know the man’s reasons.”

“ Reasons ! Why, what reason could the paltry fellow have but the five pounds a year ? ”

“ That is just the point on which I am not yet informed. But it looks like bad manners, certainly.”

“ And then the clergy are such fair-weather fellows ! They like to take all they can get of the pleasure in an easy way,—the shooting by daylight, and dining, and all that. But when it comes to any of the rough play of a country gentleman’s duty, your parson is sure to be warm asleep in bed. They leave all the harder part of the business to the profane.”

“ You must remember, Treherne, we have not had more or less of a military education. We are men of peace ; and it does not precisely suit our function to go out at midnight to deal a punch in the head, here and there.”

“ O ! pray stay at home ! I by no means wish to transfer that part of the duty. I go out for my diversion. Besides that it is a good thing to animate the watchers, I find great amusement in

it. I have been out between twenty and thirty times ; and I may go as often again, if poaching increases as it has done lately.”

“Indeed ! That is amazing !” exclaimed Mr. Sleath.

“Come, Sleath, suppose I send to you to go with us next time.”

“O,—why—yes, certainly, if you think I can be of any use.”

“Why, that is what I was thinking. Did you ever see a poacher out of court ?”

“Yes, indeed :—yes, in a very serious way.”

“Ha !” said Mr. Treherne, with sudden interest, which seemed to express, ‘Come, you have more in you than I thought, after all.’ “How was that ?” he said aloud.

“Why, I was once at a place where there was a pond, close by the house . . . .”

“A house close upon a pond ! It was a mill and mill-pond. Come, out with it ! Your window at the mill-house looked out upon the mill-pond. Well !”

Mr. Sleath took snuff and proceeded. “I heard some noise outside, and opened my window. Instantly there were five slugs driven through the window, and lodged in the opposite wall.—There were men poaching the pond.”

“What did you do?”

“I shut down the window, of course.”

“What next?”

“I went to bed.”

“What! without a single effort! Why did not you get your people, and go out, and count the fellows, and knock down one or two?”

“It was impossible, my dear Sir, in that neighbourhood. I know, between ourselves, several gentlemen in that neighbourhood who have been fired at in the same way.”

“What business have men with fish in their ponds who cannot strike a blow for their property, when they see it carried off from under their noses!” exclaimed Mr. Treherne.

“Not so fast, my dear Sir,” said Mr. Sleath. “Fighting was out of the question, I assure you: but it does not follow that we did nothing. I myself caught one rascal; and I will tell you how. I had a fine fellow of a pike caught, and put alive into a net just within the verge of the pond,—in a conspicuous place, where some of the men would come by very early to work. I had my eye upon one of them; and I desired the man I posted in a watch-box close by to mark that man particularly. He was an inquisitive, prying sort of fellow—that man; and it happened

as I thought. He stopped, and stooped down, and had his hand on the net when my man pounced upon him. We caught him there!"

Mr. Holloway asked, "And what did he say for himself?"

"O! of course he said he was only looking at the fish, and never meant to take it. But he had his hand upon it, and that settled the matter."

Mr. Holloway heard the other two gentlemen agree in a low voice that this was disgusting; so he said,

"That is much like what I have known to be done here . . . ."

"Holloway! how can you believe such a thing?"

"I tell you I know it. Ryley, who is now Mr. Gregory's bailiff, was a game-keeper at Lord B.'s, if you remember. He and the other keepers had a great jealousy of farmer Frith and his people,—Frith being more injured by the game than any other of Lord B.'s tenants, and naturally hating it more. Ryley told me that he had set snares in the boundary fences, with game in the snares, and placed watchers to observe the people when they came early to work . . . ."

"Very good!" exclaimed Sleath. "My method exactly!"

“To see,” continued Mr. Holloway, “whether the men would meddle with the game in the snares.”

“Poh!” exclaimed Sir Francis.

“Pshaw!” exclaimed Mr. Treherne.

“When I asked him, some time after,” continued Mr. Holloway, “how the matter had issued, his expression was that the plan had not answered. This was no news to me; for I had gone directly to farmer Frith and told him; and he warned all his people of the trap set for them.”

“It is an atrocious case,” declared Mr. Treherne. “No doubt, a singular one.”

“Not so,” said Mr. Holloway. “The fellow did not take credit for it as an original idea. He told me of others who did it, and from whom he learned it, and was surprised at my feeling of the enormity.”

“You see what happens for want of a little manly severity,” observed Mr. Treherne. “A milk-sop magistrate who looks ready to cry over any bruise that a poacher may have to show, and talks about violence and assault, and all that nonsense, is the very person answerable for detestable tricks like these. No man can doubt of the advantage of knocking down a poacher here and there, over such entrapping as this.”

“ You hold either assaulting, or spying and entrapping men necessary to the preservation of game ? ” asked Sir Francis.

“ I do not admit the word ‘assault,’ in the case. I would have no one strike a blow who is not empowered by the Act to capture a poacher. That being provided, I am confident that a good deal less parley, and a few more timely blows would save a vast deal of mischief and false sentiment.”

“ That is your own practice ? ”

“ Of course it is. When I know that a fellow is going to make opposition, I cut the matter short with a punch in the head.”

“ And by what means do you know it ? ”

“ You may always see by a man’s eye when he is intending a blow. How could you parry a blow but for that ? ”

“ How is it that the man does not see the same thing in your eye ? How is it that you get your blow struck ? ”

“ Perhaps,” observed Mr. Holloway, “ it is dark, as frequently happens in the night. But in that case, it is wonderful how Treherne sees the poacher’s eye.”

“ Ah ! you know nothing about it, any of you. You have not been in between twenty and thirty poaching conflicts, as I have.”

“Very true. But now, Treherne, have you never had any trouble about such a matter as assault and battery after such uses of your fist or other implement?”

“Why no: we have no such curious sight to show as a poacher suing a game-preserved for an assault. I do not expect to witness such an event in my day.”

“Not if you keep within your own boundaries. And your people may escape being so sued, if you can ensure their not exercising their power of assault on the high road. But I have heard of such a thing as men forgetting boundaries when fighting; and I must say it appears a very large trust that you repose in the discretion of your keepers and their assistants.”

“We must use our discretion as we best may, to defend ourselves from the consequences of an abominable law. After all the nonsense that was talked about stopping poaching by legalizing the sale of game, look at the aggressions we are subjected to! There is just as much poaching now as there ever was before 1830.”

“That is very true.”

“And every man of sense and knowledge,—every country gentleman—knew how it would be, when that Act was passed. The law is of no man-

ner of use. It has only vulgarised the amusements of gentlemen."

"Can these men of sense and knowledge show us what ought to be done?" asked Mr. Holloway.  
"Sir Francis, what say you?"

"I can only say that the affair looks wholly desperate, under the present law. Our duty is plain enough,—to administer the law faithfully as magistrates, till some happy change takes place. But, speaking seriously, it is a daily affliction to me to see how the game-laws operate in our rural districts."

"You would be just as unhappy in towns," declared Mr. Treherne. "There the burglars and pickpockets would assault your sensibilities as poachers do in the country."

"There is this difference," replied Sir Francis. "Laws for the protection of property which is essential to the life, comfort, security and social ease of men work beneficially, and, on account of the common consent of society, easily. But laws made to protect the mere pleasures of a single class of men,—and of a class which has the command of all other pleasures,—are not likely to work easily. And if the property in question be of a nature detrimental to the more essential property which surrounds it, the law will be pretty

sure to work not at all, or most disastrously. There is a common consent of society to protect by law houses, money, and goods; and all mere luxuries which are not hurtful. But you will never obtain any wide assent to the preservation of hares and pheasants which rob the farmer, seduce the labourer, and devour the food which is sorely needed by men, women, and children. Thus, as you see, our game-laws are disregarded and violated by all classes, from peers and M.P.s, down through lord mayors, tradesmen, farmers, labourers, to little half-naked boys just old enough to pick up eggs."

"It will never do," said Mr. Treherne, "to make distinctions about one sort of property and another. All property is sacred in the eye of the law."

"That is what the slaveholder says when he ties up a woman to the whipping-post. The answer is, that mankind will and do make distinctions as to the nature and tenure of much property once held sacred under the law. Now, do not alarm yourself with the supposition that I wish, or that any party wishes, for an abolition of this or any kind of property that can be held in consistency with the essential condition which is at the bottom of the very institution of property,—its recon-

cileableness with the general good. Every farmer you like to ask, every complainer on any side of this question, will declare that he has no wish to interfere with gentlemen's pleasures . . . ”

“ That is all cant.”

“ That,” repeated Sir Francis, “ he has no wish to interfere with gentlemen's pleasures, no desire whatever for the extirpation of any race of savoury animals and birds: that what is required is that such property should be rendered harmless to others;—to such social interests as are of much more importance than the sporting pleasures of country gentlemen.”

“ In other words, you insist,—or those for whom you speak,—on our keeping our hares and pheasants cooped, or in some way prevented from straying;—a thing which you know to be impossible.”

“ Very well. In declaring that condition impossible, you give the matter up. A much more evident impossibility is that society should permit its best food to be eaten, and its homely children corrupted and made wretched by hares and pheasants.”

“ That last is our affair. We pay for our sporting pleasures: and I suppose we may be permitted to spend our money as we please: and . . . ”

"Why, I do not know," declared Sir Francis.

"Bless my soul! what next? Do you question a man's right to purchase what pleasures he has a mind for, if he pays for them properly?"

"I think there are cases in which it may be questionable."

"Everything depends on what you mean by having a right," observed Mr. Holloway. "We all know, by the laws about nuisance, that there are possessions and pursuits which a man may not have in certain situations, however willing he may be to pay any money price or penalty, and however innocent these possessions and pursuits may be in some other place. The man has here a perfect moral right, and legal right too, to have or to do a thing in one situation which is both illegal and morally wrong in another.—And then again, what he may have a legal right to possess and do, he may be morally wrong in possessing and doing in certain states of society."

"That is what I meant," said Sir Francis. "Sooner or later the law (under a representative constitution) overtakes such cases, and renders legally wrong what was before morally wrong. In the interval, if a man asks me whether he has not a right to do so and so, because the law sanctions it, I say 'Why, I don't know:' that is, I have my

own opinion, and I leave it to his conscience.—About this very matter of game-preserving; the state of things contemplated under the law was that of a natural amount of wild animals on certain estates,—human food being raised elsewhere, and in sufficient quantity for the then number of people. Indeed, there was evidently no thought whatever of game interfering with human food. Times have changed. On the one hand, gentlemen have adopted a fashion and taste of artificially increasing the quantity of game on their estates till it really swarms to an unnatural extent. On the other hand, the regular and vast increase in the number of people to be fed has caused an extension of tillage which brings the farmer's fields into close contact with the game-preserved's covers. The people are yet insufficiently fed. While the people have not the command of a sufficiency of food, I think it is questionable whether a game-preserved has a moral right to cause a large consumption, and a larger destruction of human food by wild animals, however scrupulously he may pay up the amount in money, to the last farthing.—Whether such compensation ever is paid, to the satisfaction of the agriculturist, is another question.”

“I abide by the law,” said Mr. Treherne. “I

hear with horror such new-fangled and revolutionary doctrines from such a man as you, Sir Francis."

"It is a greater agent than Sir Francis, or any other man, that brings about revolutions," observed Mr. Holloway. "Time is the great teacher of what you call revolutionary doctrine,—and in this instance, eminently. When the old fellow falls in with Nimrod, and lays one hand on his shoulder, and points with the other to the plough and team entering upon the scene, it is a sure warning to Nimrod that he must be off to some other hunting-field."

"Ah! it is pretty certain that he will leave his own," said Mr. Treherne. "And his neighbours there will rue his absence when it is too late to get him back again. What think you, Sir Francis?"

"If Nimrod keeps up with his age, and will stay at home, and live according to the conditions of his time, nobody will wish him away. But if, wherever he alights, offences spring up, and the jails overflow, and ruin and curses spread like a pestilence from the homestead to the hovel, I think the general wish will be that Nimrod should seek a new hunting-field."

"Pray where?" inquired Mr. Treherne. "If

one is to be banished, one would like to know one's place of exile beforehand."

"I do not see how Nimrod can be banished, except by death," observed Sir Francis: "and the old Scandinavian faith says not even by death. Wherever wild animals are, there is Nimrod's home. If you complain of banishment being threatened, you speak as an English landlord, not as a sportsman. Be an English landlord, in the spirit and manner of the time, and nobody will wish you anywhere but at home."

"Much obliged to you for leave to dwell on my paternal acres, though not on my own terms. But I press for the name of the new hunting-field."

"There is a wide choice of old and new. There are wild moorlands within the island, if you do not want to travel far. It will be some time before the Scotch moors are under tillage. They will more than last our time, and our sons' after us."

"The fashion of going to Norway to sport seems spreading," observed Mr. Holloway. "Fishing and shooting may be had in perfection there, for an age to come, and with the people to thank you to boot."

"And look at Canada! There is a field for you!"

“Thank you. I prefer my own covers.”

“Yes, indeed,” Mr. Sleath now ventured to put in, in a tone of indignation.

“Only prepare yourselves for a very short lease from old Time, that is all. He is a peremptory old landlord, that. We are all merely tenants under him,—crowns and cradles alike being but occupations; and there is no erection of his,—no institution or arrangement that we have not to quit after notice from him. It is something when he offers a new tenancy in place of the old, even if you have to travel some way to it. For my part, when I can no longer sport righteously in agricultural districts, I think of being off to the North seas for the noblest sport of all—whale-fishing.”

“Pah!” said Mr. Sleath. “To get drenched in oil!”

“Not exactly. We sportsmen do not clean our own fish, or pluck our own birds: and neither should we cut up the whales we should bag. O! Treherne, think of the nobleness of that sport! Think of the watch for the game amidst the wild seas! Think of the careering over the waves,—the signal—the laying to—the boats out—the chase and circumvention of the prey,—the bold harpoon stroke—the giving out the rope—and

then the flight of the boat apparently at the creature's mercy, but not truly so,—only the stooping to conquer,—then the creature's death-plunge, and the victory of man's devices and nerve over the monster's force and instinct! Is not this noble sport? Is not this exploit, with sympathy in every eye, and fellowship in every hand, and cheers on every tongue, better than shooting timid hares and fluttering birds, amidst the peevish curses of half-ruined farmers, and the jealousy of half-starved labourers,—and all this in sight of gloomy new jails built to receive the criminals corrupted by our mere pleasures?"

"Romance will not do against common sense," declared Mr. Treherne.

"Agreed!" said Sir Francis.

"Then let me ask your common sense whether there would not be more poaching than ever if we were to leave our game unprotected, and be off to the North seas?"

"I think fact and common sense agree that where there is most game there is most poaching. There never was so much poaching as now when preserving is more strict than ever before. I am for being off to Canada, or Norway, or the North seas, while we mark how nature and time will manage matters between the tillage and the game.

Let tillage have her way first : that is the clearest point of all ; and she will keep down the game to the point which suits her own purposes,—raising instead of demoralising her labourers, by doing that part of her business as business, and not as aggression and theft.—As for the landlord's woods, there is the law of trespass, which already protects his young trees and his fences.—And if the appetite for game in towns demands a further supply, game will, because it must, be reared in such places and modes as may be innocuous to agriculture. This is the course which, it seems to me, common sense points out and prophesies.”

“ A pretty mess you revolutionary people would make of it ! You sow discontent now between the landlord and his tenants ; and next, you would put fire-arms into the hands of the lower orders of society. You will have your hands so full of murders then that you may wish yourselves at the North Pole.”

“ Why so ? How should there be an increase of murders when conflicts with keepers would cease, and other things would remain the same ? — Yet not the same : for the jails are half filled with wretches whose career of crime began with the poaching to which they were incited by the

preservation of game. There would therefore be a less amount of crime generally ; and no conflicts with keepers in particular :—two reasons, as it seems to me, why there should be less murder than now, and not more.”

“One main foundation of the game-law system is, and ever was, as you must know very well, the danger of putting guns into the hands of the common people.”

“The old Normans, as hated victors, might find such a safeguard necessary enough : but how has the provision worked since ? What but these same laws has put offensive weapons into the hands of reckless men ? The murders committed on account of the game far exceed those perpetrated on account of any other kind of property whatever. Come come, Treherne : it will not do for a game-preserved to be squeamish about murders ;—one, too, who boasts of having been in above twenty poaching fights, and of giving many a knock-down blow at midnight.”

“Besides,” said Mr. Holloway, “game is taken by wires and nets, and little by shooting. I am not afraid on that score. It is not the habit of the English peasantry to carry fire-arms : and they would hardly begin to adopt it just when the game is reduced to the quantity that would exist

without preserving. No, I should have no fear on that ground."

"Well, gentlemen, I shall look with some curiosity and amusement to your conduct on the bench and in the field," said Mr. Treherne. "I shall know henceforth what unenglish and revolutionary ideas you carry in your breasts when your faces are fair."

"What ideas I carry are no secret," said Sir Francis. "Every one who knows me knows that I take what sport comes in my way—(except battues)—and that I have refused to preserve my game, and am bringing up my nephew,—the young heir,—to understand that if he follows sport hereafter, he should look to some wild region for it, and not damage any district under tillage for his own pleasure."

"And as for me," said Mr. Holloway, "I always hate adjudicating in game cases, as you know: and . . . ."

"And do vast mischief by an ill-placed leniency," observed Mr. Treherne, "when we make you attend."

"Yes, indeed," observed Mr. Sleath. "It is a great privilege to a rascal of a poacher to see Mr. Holloway on the bench. He always knows that—that . . . ."

“What does he always know?” calmly inquired Mr. Holloway.

Mr. Sleath took snuff, afraid he had gone rather too far. Mr. Holloway resumed,

“He knows that if he is fairly proved to have transgressed the law, he will be punished. As to the amount of punishment,—if the law gives me a discretion, I shall use it. And I shall take leave to desire, in private conversation, in open meetings, and, I will add, in my secret prayers, a better system of manners and of law.”

“Ah!” said Mr. Treherne, “it is melancholy to see society so tainted with new-fangled notions, that even clergymen and gentlemen who ought to know how to respect the wisdom of our fathers talk like so many democrats. Things went well enough in the days of our fathers. Men were contented then, from the highest to the lowest.”

“Not exactly on this subject,” observed Sir Francis, looking at the bookshelves, and taking down a volume of Blackstone. “Here is what was thought by a person of some weight, eighty years ago, about his own and former times: ‘Though the forest-laws are now mitigated, and by degrees grown entirely obsolete, yet from this root has sprung a bastard slip, known by the name of the game-law, now arrived to and wantoning

in its highest vigour : both founded upon the same unreasonable notions of permanent property in wild creatures ; and both productive of the same tyranny to the commons ; but with this difference, that the forest-laws established only one mighty hunter throughout the land, the game-laws have raised a little Nimrod in every manor.' So said Blackstone, eighty years since : and you and I agree, you know, that matters have not mended since by the alteration of the law."

" Blackstone is not infallible," declared Mr. Treherne. " He has been found mistaken about a thing or two. He is no oracle of mine."

" Till some one can show that game-laws have not been always ' productive of tyranny to the commons,' I shall find myself compelled to believe Blackstone's assertion, and the testimony of all history, rather than conclude that everybody was contented enough in the days of our fathers."

" That was the plea, or rather the querulous complaint, of the French country gentlemen at the time of the Revolution," observed Mr. Holloway, " when they found the peasantry no longer willing to whip the ponds all night, to keep the frogs quiet, for the repose of their tyrants, or to boil nettles for their children's sole food when the

game swarmed before their eyes. There was the same cry then of the contentment there was in the good old days. But there were some who remembered how Louis XI. caused the ears of two gentlemen to be cut off for shooting a hare on the estate of one of them, and pleaded precedent of that kind for the discontent of the low order of the commons upon whom the tyranny had descended in their own day. And such precedent I engage to find, Treherne, if you like, for the discontent of the peasantry among whom we walk every day."

" Do not come to me with your precedents and pleas, Holloway, like a trumpery lawyer. I take my stand upon the law; and I will prosecute my rights of property under the law with the utmost vigour, to the last moment, as a duty to the constitution of my country and the interests of society at large."

" I approve entirely of your determination," declared Mr. Sleath. " I honour your determination, Mr. Treherne. And I shall do all in my humble power to emulate you."

" But take care, Mr. Sleath, not to follow him further than is quite safe," observed Sir Francis. " I have my doubts about this knock-down blow in the dark, warranted only by the expression of

the eye, if it could be seen. I would advise you to inquire first whether that is in accordance with the constitution of the country, and the interests of society.”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed Mr. Treherne. “You will never catch Sleath at such work: and I beseech you do not make him out my double.—Sleath, do not fancy yourself a country gentleman. It takes two or three generations to make a real country gentleman.”

“I yield to no one in love of sport,” declared Mr. Sleath, with nervous dignity: “nor in a strict administration of the law.”

“Ay, ay, we know that,” said Mr. Treherne.

“We are quite aware of that,” observed Mr. Holloway.

“Well: if that does not constitute a true country gentleman, I really do not know what does,” said Mr. Sleath, looking from one to another as he, once more, took snuff.—But nobody made any answer.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE JAIL.

Poor Luke found it a dreadful misfortune to be carried to jail. He was very miserable on the road there, thinking of granny and his sister and brothers, and wondering how they would get on without his earnings: but he forgot all sorrows but his own when once within the awful walls. Never did human being feel more disconsolate than he did that afternoon. He was turned into a room where there were men who seemed all to know one another very well, but to have nothing to say to him. Some were walking up and down the room, whistling or talking. Some were standing in groups, gossiping and laughing. One was asleep on a bench. One old man was reading a book with a tattered cover. He stood so as to catch as much light from the window as he could, and opposite the door. When the door was unlocked for Luke's entrance, the old man looked over his spectacles at the new comer, and then

appeared to resume his reading : but perhaps he was struck with compassion at the lad's awkwardness and shyness, as he stood in the middle of the floor, with nothing to do or even to hold, and not knowing which way to look : for in a few minutes the old man came and spoke to him, asking whether he had just arrived, and (as the most delicate way of inquiring about his offence) how long he thought he should stay. When he heard Luke's story, he laughed, and said,

“ Ay, I thought as much by your sheepish face. I thought you were not in for any real offence, by your looking so uncomfortable : and that was why I accosted you. I am not in for any real offence either; and so I don’t mix much with the rest,” nodding towards the groups of prisoners. “ There are some bad fellows among them, not fit for us to associate with ; and . . . . ”

“ I never heard such bad words in my life,” exclaimed Luke.

“ Ah ! you find that out already. Are you to have hard labour ? ”

“ Yes,” said Luke, dolefully.

“ Well, now, I think that an advantage ; and I almost wish that I was young enough to go upon the wheel. You will go upon the wheel to-morrow, and then you will be out of the way, for the

time, of these fellows and their bad language and filthy talk."

"Who are they?"

"Regular thieves:—town people, many of them,—as bad as can be. I find it a great drawback, and have done, at times, for these eight and twenty years . . . ."

"What, have you been here all those years?"

"Why, no," said the old man, laughing again. "But my way of life brings me here from time to time. If I remember right, this is my seventh abode here.—Ah! you look surprised:—you wonder that I have not got transported: but I have always been careful to avoid that, as a thing incompatible with my way of life."

Luke did not know anything about liabilities to transportation. He was wondering who this person was, and what his way of life could be. The old man went on,

"You will find it a drawback, as I do, the being plunged among such people as these, when you come here,—unless you live to see a proper system of classification adopted. Then . . . ."

"But you don't think I shall come here any more, after this once?" said Luke.

"That rests with yourself, of course. But it is the usual method with those whose way of life is

to live by the game. It involves some sacrifice, certainly, as my wife and daughters observe, on my having to leave them, now that I am getting into years: but it is a pity, as the father of a family feels, to quit a lucrative way of life for a temporary inconvenience. And you, a young fellow not above twenty, I should think . . . . ”

“Not twenty yet.”

“So I supposed. You, without a family to care for, have no reason to mind being clapped up for a time.”

“I have a granny,” said Luke, “and a sister and brothers: and . . . . ” He paused to gulp down his grief, and then said, “And I don’t know what will become of them for want of me.”

“I should have no fear,” said the old man, in a consolatory tone. “It is a short term. They will get through, I dare say: and if not, nobody starves in this country. If the county keeps you here, the parish must maintain them there.”

“But granny will never . . . . ”

“Well: if she objects to go into the Union, she will make an effort to live for these few weeks: and when you once get out, you may make money fast, and set her at ease. I have lived for thirty years on the game-preserves within thirty miles or so, and by a little prudence have done extremely

well. You may have heard of me. I am Joshua Killip. Ah! you are not aware of the name, I see;—not so much as you will be hereafter. I am very well known in the town where I live, and have a good business there; for the gentlemen like to be able to depend on a supply of game whenever they want it; and they know my punctuality, and that I never disappoint my customers. For thirty years I have had a good steady business; and in our state of society, when it is often so difficult for a family man to bring up his children, it is such an advantage to have a good steady business, that, as I tell my wife and daughters, we must submit cheerfully to the drawback of my being occasionally here."

"But what do the people in your town say?"

"Say? why, that they are very glad to see me home again:—that is what they say when I get out. O! you mean about my being in prison. They say nothing, and they think nothing about that. They are always just the same in their manners to me and mine, whether I am in or out. But I must observe that it is rather a peculiar case. It is not perhaps one man in a thousand that has a head steady enough for my position. A man is apt to lose himself, for want of the steady prudence which I have made a point of

cultivating. One man gets angry, and provokes the magistrates and gentry. Another gets frightened, and lets himself be made a slave of by some sly old poaching captain. Another has an ill-grounded sense of disgrace, and loses his self-respect, for want of knowing the real opinions of others about game property. Another gets into bad company in a place like this, and becomes corrupted, and falls into crime ; and then he is ruined. I have so much at stake that I have conducted myself very carefully. I have ascertained and relied upon public opinion in regard to game, and have thus preserved my self-respect. I have looked steadily at the consequences of my course, and so have avoided all fear. And I have escaped the contamination of bad company, and thus have not upon my conscience any act of which I need be ashamed. My abhorrence of crime is as great as that of any judge in the land ; and that, I believe, is as well known to these scoundrels here as to my customers and family.”

“ Then, you don’t think me guilty ? ” exclaimed Luke, with a brightening face. “ I wish you would tell granny so, when I go out.”

“ I do not know enough of the circumstances of your life to decide,” declared Killip. “ I think nothing of the charge on which, as you tell me,

you are here: and I have been communicative with you about my own affairs because I may possibly save you from the dangers that in this place beset a young man in a state of depression and alarm. But you know better than I whether you are innocent of all wrong."

"I never thought any harm in what I did."

"Did you ever steal anything?"

"Lord! no—never."

"Not a chicken,—nor a shirt off a bush,—nor a few stakes of a fence,—nor a sly pint of milk from a cow?"

"Never such a thing,—nor ever thought of it."

"You are an honest lad, and I respect you," declared Killip, clapping him on the shoulder. "Keep that honesty of yours, whatever you may hear and see in this place. I am an example before your eyes that such a thing may be done. Keep your honesty, and you will never repent coming in here."

Luke sighed so as to make Killip explain.

"Men make great mistakes from a sort of superstitious dread of the place itself; whereas it is what one comes in for that is the real consideration; and also that one should keep one's head when in. I know a man,—a mere labourer,—charged with meddling with the game, and fined five

pounds. The poor fellow made the mistake of paying the fine, instead of coming here for a few weeks. He sold his bed to pay the fine, and has slept on straw ever since. I have told him many a time that he is a warning against inflicting such a privation on one's self, just to save an expense to the county."

"Little Job will have my bed at home," observed Luke, sighing again.

"And how much better that is than depriving yourself of it! There it will be when you go out again."

"It would be very far from bringing five pounds," said Luke. "It can't properly be called a bed, to sell, though I used to sleep sound enough on it.—And then, there are my wages stopped."

"You will make that up, and many times over, when you get out. You may sleep sound on that idea, till the time comes."

Luke did not sleep sound on that idea, or any other. His supper and his bed were better than he had been accustomed to; and his mind was wonderfully lightened by his conversation with Killip. But still he was in a prison. The sound of lock and bolt fell on his heart drearily. In the early morning he listened in vain for the crowing of the cock which usually roused him for his work,

but which he now awaited half wakefully. His eye wandered up from his bed for the holes in the cottage thatch through which were wont to come either early sunbeams or rain drops. Instead of tramping over the meadows and along the road, in the free air, to farmer Onslow's field, there was a dim prospect of prison labour,—he did not know what,—but something strange, and close and disagreeable, and, in spite of all that Killip had said, disgraceful. Yet, the day-room in which he had his breakfast was so painful to him, from the jeers and questions of the bad people, that he was glad to be called to work; and he stepped on the tread-wheel with less shame and sorrow than he thought he should. One reason of this was that he found he had nothing to learn. Luke's greatest trouble in life, till lately, had been having anything to learn. It was just what he could least do. Now, there really was not anything to learn, though nothing could be newer to him than a tread-wheel. It was fatiguing to him; for he had been accustomed to take his own time about lifting his big feet from the ground; and when he did it, he contrived to move every part of his body in the effort. This habit made his present work pretty hard: but then he was very strong; and he came off, after the first three-quarters of

an hour, less hot and uncomfortable than most of his companions.

At the end of his twenty minutes' rest, he met with the first real pleasure he had felt for some days. He had to get upon the wheel at the opposite end from that at which he had gone off: and he saw a friend's face in the man who had mounted last before him. It was Waterston.

“They could not talk while at work; but they nodded and smiled. It could not be much to Waterston that Luke was here: but to Luke it was a great matter that a comrade was there who would, he hoped, be in the same room at meals and after work: and while he was treading, he thought of a great many things that he would ask, the minute they could have a little talk.”

“How did they catch you?” asked Luke, the first time they were together in the day-room. “Did our people leave you alone in the middle of the field, as they did me? I was not quick enough, you see, and stood still. Was that the way they caught you?”

“No,” replied Waterston, with a peevish oath. “I was not at it with any of the club at all. I was by myself,—out on my own account, curse me! I wish I had been at home, or at church, or anywhere but in Eyre's field. 'Tis the first

time I have been caught for a single hare, all alone ;—caught like a silly bird left by the covey, —trying to hide under a clod.”

“ O ! you did try to hide, did you ? that is just what they say I should have done.”

“ There was no use in that. They knew me as soon as they set eyes on me. And here I am for above another month ; and all . . . . ”

“ Only a month more ! ” said Luke. “ I wish I was going out in a month.”

“ But all for a hare ! ” said Waterston. “ The time has been when I have carried myself very differently before the gentry ;—when I have pulled out my money-bag, and said ‘ Thank you, gentlemen : I expected it would have been a great deal more. I can spare this small portion with much pleasure.’ And then, in paying the fine and costs, I have let them see how much gold and silver there was in the bag, and permitted them to guess that I got it all in one night by the game.”

“ That was funny,” observed Luke.

“ Yes : there was some fun in that. But this time they caught me at a disadvantage ; and a poor figure I cut. This is what vexes me : and also its being all for one hare.”

“ But you are going out in a month,” sighed

Luke. "I wish I was. But when my three months are up, I may be kept longer, they say. I don't understand it rightly; but they say if something is not done, I may have to stay six months longer."

"Ah! that is about the sureties. I heard Groves speaking about that."

"Groves! What did he say? What—was he speaking about me?"

"Yes, about you and the sureties."

"Well! Tell me what he said."

"Why: I don't know about that. On second thoughts, I don't see clearly that I have any right to tell Groves's ideas, out of council."

"You shall tell me—you must tell me," cried Luke, following him. "I will know how long I am to stay here."

"You are not going the way to work to learn it from me, Luke Voile. I shall tell you if I please, and not otherwise."

"You shall," said Luke, pushing him up against the wall. Waterston threw him off, saying,

"You are an inferior person to me, Luke Voile. You are subordinate; and you are not to dictate to me."

"And hard masters you make,—Groves and

you," cried Luke. "It was you two that got me to do such things, . . . ."

"'Tis false," said Waterston, addressing himself to the prisoners who had gathered to enjoy the quarrel. "He poached in a meadow, one day, all alone; and came and told me; and now he says I and another tempted him into it.—Hold your tongue, lad! Nobody wants to hear you. And nobody is like to have the amusement of seeing a quarrel; for I never quarrel with people beneath me."

Luke looked round for old Killip; but he was not there. He did not want for listeners, however. While Waterston walked off whistling, in a very provoking way, two or three of the prisoners encouraged Luke to tell his story. These men could inform him of what he wanted to know,—about the securities. It was too true that if some friend did not come, when his three months were up, to enter into security for his good behaviour in regard to the game for twelve months, he must remain where he was for six months more. Luke could only shake his head when his new acquaintance asked him if he had no friend in the world who would answer for him, and set him free. There was nobody, he was well aware, who could answer for his not meddling

with the game, now he had such a character for poaching: and there was no one but Groves who could or would risk the money; and Groves would only do it for the sake of being handsomely repaid out of the game.

These were harassing thoughts: and another thought that made Luke ready to cry was, that after being so glad to meet Waterston, Waterston should be so hard upon him, and make him more unhappy than he was before. To prevent crying before so many men, who never cried but often laughed, and to forget his trouble, he was glad to listen to the stories those men were telling. They did not whisper quite so low as they sometimes did when they told their histories, but let Luke hear some things which filled his whole mind so as to leave room for nothing else.

In another day or two, Luke began to feel, if not exactly to think, that there were some things belonging to imprisonment which were very pleasant. Perhaps there are no circumstances, anywhere in the universe, which can wholly ruin the satisfaction which God has indissolubly united with the development and exercise of the powers of a rational being. It is not to be laid to the charge of Providence, but to man's abuse of the gifts of Providence, when such satisfactions are

first experienced in connexion with guilt, and in the form of temptations to further crime. Luke had lived neglected by society,—untaught, uncared for while he was not mischievous. He vegetated, with as little experience of gratification or suffering as was possible to one actually human. It was the law that first stung him into feeling and consciousness ; and a portion of the law which wrought for the oppression of such as he, and for the benefit of those alone who appeared to possess already all the good things that could be bestowed by God or enjoyed by man.—Luke was next noticed only to be used,—to be made a slave of ; and in the process, there was enough of indulgence and pleasure mingled to confuse his mind as to whether his new state were a good or an evil. Then again, he found practically that his conduct and condition were, as he was told, ‘all a chance :’ that he might offend the law and be no worse, but much the better ; and then that he might be exposed to the vengeance of the law without having done any wrong.—He next learned that people in prison, and some good many out of it, thought it no disgrace to a man to be there ; and some persons could be there many times in their lives,—if for merely game-offences,—without suffering for it afterwards in

the society which was their world. He was now discovering that there were things in life which he had never dreamed of;—ways of living in comparison with which granny's cottage, and his hard work and poor wages, appeared so dull and comfortless, that he began to dread going home again, and to think that it would not be such a terrible thing, after all, if he should have to stay till the next July,—provided only the men who told him stories would stay also.

And what stories they were!—stories of all kinds of lucky chances,—of escapes down by-streets, or in ditches, or up in trees, or over housetops, or in cellars:—of cheating the law, and quizzing and tricking its officers:—of rich sudden gains,—of feastings and good fellowship at public-houses;—of great and profitable exploits that had been achieved; and greater and more profitable that remained to be achieved. These were the things that Luke heard, and that excited his wonder and admiration: and made him exercise his mind, and were associated with all the pleasures of that first exercise. There was no one to tell him that something remained behind,—that the whole history was not related. There was no one to tell him of the occasional squalid misery of a life of thievery; of the fear and per-

petual risk ; of the mutual distrust and hatred of comrades in guilt ; of the details, in short, of the mighty fact that 'there is no peace to the wicked.' He listened at spare times in the day : he dreamed at night of gold and silver in his pocket, of hot suppers at public-houses ; of escapes from the constables,—escapes in which everybody helped him and laughed at the police : and next day, he was eager for another lesson.

Then he began to avoid Killip. He would not look that way, when Killip was reading by the window, and was always in the midst of the groups which Killip would not approach, nor take notice of: and he put on a careless air when the old man one day found an opportunity of warning him that his head appeared not to be steady enough for a plan of living upon the game, for that he was getting in among the town thieves already. He had nothing to say to Waterston,—not wanting him, but liking his new acquaintance better.

Waterston, however, was not disposed to let slip a stout and useful and deeply-implicated member of the club without an effort to secure him. In consequence of a conversation with Killip one day, he made advances to Luke,—said that old friends should not part hastily,—that he

had been cross the first day, being harassed by some troubles of his own, and that he now reproached himself for not having told what was due alike to Groves and Luke,—that Groves would perhaps come and be Luke's security, if he could entirely depend on Luke's industry and allegiance till all debts were paid.—Waterston was rather surprised, even after what he had seen, at Luke's progress in confidence and carelessness. He appeared, as he really was, indifferent as to how long he staid, or what became of his connexion with his club. Other ways were open, as he had learned, to young men of spirit; and if old friends neglected him, there were new ones to be had.

So Waterston asked him next, in an off-hand way, when he expected a visit from his relations,—his granny or his sister. As he anticipated, this had more effect on Luke than anything else he could have said. Such an idea had never entered his head: but once having entered it, nothing could put it out again.—No matter the improbability! No matter what the distance was, or any other difficulty! Bell would walk a great way to see him: Bell had never been parted from him before: and when it was clear that the families of the prisoners did come to see them,

Luke had hardly a doubt that Bell would appear one day soon. On the whole, he much wished that she should not come. His heart swelled when one or another of his prison companions was speaking with a mother, or a wife or a sister ; and he felt how he should like to hear Bell's voice again. But it would be painful to him that she should enter such a place, and see such people : and when his eye wandered to the door, on any one entering, or he heard any conversation between prisoners and visitors, he began to hope again earnestly that he might get out at the end of three months, lest Bell should then grow impatient and come.

A misfortune happened meantime. The two of Luke's new acquaintance whom he best liked, —the two who could tell him most of hair-breadth escapes, and hot suppers, and lucky gains, had to leave the prison when only a month of his term was expired. They had been in for four months ; and now they were to go. Luke feelingly assured them that their departure would make a great difference to him: and they, on their part, assured him that nothing would be easier than for them to meet again, when he came out ; and in fact, they would remember him for his good, he might rely upon it.

Next, Waterston's term was up. Luke was sorry to lose him too, on some accounts: but then Waterston was to carry some messages,—which was a good thing. He was to let Groves know that Luke thought it only fair, as he had been caught in the act of working for Groves, that he should be bailed out of prison as soon as possible: and if this was not done, they need not reckon on him any more. There were other ways open to young men of spirit; and he had other friends.—To granny and Bell the message was that they were on no account to think of coming to visit him. They must get on as well as they could till he should return home; and then he would do fine things for them, and make his enemies repent that they had ever meddled with him. Waterston clapped him on the back;—they nodded a farewell, and turned,—Luke to go to the treadwheel, and Waterston to leave the prison.

What was Luke's surprise therefore, on quitting work, to find Waterston again in the day room! Waterston was ready enough to tell how it was. He threw aside all reserve, and was eager to make a friend of any one who would listen to his grievances. To several, it was an old story,—so old as to be tiresome; and these walked away, to play cards, or talk of something newer. But others, as

well as Luke, had something yet to learn of liabilities under the game laws. As Waterston was about leaving the jail, he was met at the gate by another commitment for the same offence . . .

“What! twice over for the same offence!” cried an innocent learner.

“Yes;—only they put it on another ground, you see,—on the ground of my having shot the hare on a Sunday. ‘Tis the same hare; and they are the same magistrates, you see.”

“Then I think the same two months might have done,” observed a pick-pocket.

“Yes; but there is the spite of it!” explained Waterston. “If they had sent this commitment along with the other, the two months for the Sunday would have run along with the two months for the trespass: so they met me at my coming out, determined as they were to give me four months for the same hare.”

“Why don’t you disappoint them by getting your friends to pay down the five pounds?” asked a hearer.

“That is just mocking me,” observed Waterston; “and I take it unkind at such a time.”

“I did not exactly mean that: indeed far from it,” said the man. “I thought you belonged to a club, that’s all.”

“ So I do : but 'tis a pretty strict affair,—that club. They help one handsomely enough, when one is caught in their service,—as I hope my young friend here will find when his term is up, as I know he has found already. But the captain won't forgive one's doing anything on one's own account. Then, they complain that there is no knowing when we have done with our enemies when there is a gun in the question. Once or twice, when they have got a man out of jail at some expense, and thought they should have his services for the season, they have found all their money and trouble thrown away. The magistrates have given notice of his having used a gun without a certificate ; and then, of course the tax-surveyor comes upon him : he can't pay ; and he lies in jail for many months more. I have known one such account run up to twenty pounds.”

“ I'll be hanged if I'd bear that,” declared one of the men. “ And all about a hare ! ”

“ One had better do many things than take a hare at such a cost,” Waterston observed. “ I know I wish I had. It would have been better for me.”

“ What ? How ? ” asked Luke, full of his new sort of curiosity.

“ I wish I had committed a felony. Then I

should have come in for two months, and have done with it. And one never knows when one has done with a poaching act."

"Then it is light and easy work, paying for a felony, is it?" inquired Luke.

"Why, it is pretty fair. It is hard enough; but not too hard. The punishments about the game are too hard, and make one think of doing more for them."

Luke's growing faculty of thought was now exercised on a comparison of the sayings of old Killip and Waterston. Killip had warned him against having any intercourse with the felons in the jail, and against thinking of meddling with any other property than game: whereas Waterston seemed to think that felony answered the best of the two.—As was very natural, Luke ended by yielding to the temptation of hearing what the felons had to tell. Every day, he settled himself more and more in the expectation of not getting out till July; every day, he grew more sociable with his companions; and in a few weeks, he found it true enough that some felonies were less punished than poaching; for some of his prison comrades left the jail, and others came in, for acts of unquestionable crime, while he lay there, without friend or help or message from without, a

prisoner for want of bail, after his sentence had expired.

There was no lack of prisoners of his own class, the while. The proportion of poachers to other offenders was so large as to be very striking to the prisoners themselves, as well as to the county-rate payers, the chaplain, the governor of the jail, and everybody who knew the facts, except only the game-preservers. The governor, Mr. Saville, was so impressed by the numbers that came into his custody, and by several instances of offenders returned upon his hands by recommitments for the same offence, that he consulted with the chaplain as to whether it was not the duty of men in their positions to make the facts known that if there were any illegality (which he could not help suspecting) it might be exposed; and if not, the attention of influential persons be drawn to the consideration of a remedy.

In consequence of their deliberation, the chaplain inserted in his next Report a passage which he hoped might find its way beyond the coterie of magistrates with whom he had intercourse, and whom he could not seriously impress with his convictions, and who had not patience to listen to his experience. What he wrote was this.

“ Before I became chaplain of this jail, I did duty for twenty years in three rural parishes, lying widely apart: and in all that time I found it impossible to convince my poor parishioners that poaching was a sin, or that they offended God by killing hares which destroyed the produce of their gardens. I then found that any labourer who had been in prison for such an offence was rarely good for anything again. Since I have held my present office, I have seen how it is that he becomes ruined, hardened, degraded, and yet thinks himself a martyr. With this spectacle ever before my eyes, I may be permitted to appeal to the game-preservers, and ask them, as Christians ‘ who are not to seek their own, but rather another’s good,’ whether they can justify conduct which lays a snare for the conscience of a weak brother.”

About the same time, the governor reported in writing two or three cases so severe that he could not but suppose there was some mistake or illegality: and he reported verbally as often as the arrival of the visiting magistrates gave him opportunity. Some of the parties addressed thought this very simple and innocent conduct of the governor and chaplain, as perilling their offices: while others thought it very guilty work, and

talked of dismissing both, if they did not learn to know their place better.

One day in February, three magistrates came to visit the jail. The governor took his usual course of reporting the cases which appeared to him to require special notice ; and among them were two of cumulative penalties sustained by poachers.

“We have power to impose such,” drily observed Sir Allan Boyd.

“I really thought,” said the governor, “that there must have been some mistake.”

“You have only to obey the commitments, Mr. Saville,” observed Major Lowe. “You have only to obey the commitments, and not make any remark upon them.”

The governor bowed.

“Officially, he means, Mr. Saville,—only officially,” said the third visitor, Mr. Mereworth. “I, for my part, am always glad to hear whatever you can tell me,—if not officially, for my own satisfaction. Have you any case of cumulative infliction at present ? Eh ? Have you many ? Eh ? Are there many magistrates, think you, who would impose these cumulative penalties ? Eh ?”

“I have heard practising lawyers say that

about one magistrate in three or four, in game-preserving districts, will do it."

"And what do these practising lawyers think of it, eh?—Never mind those two brethren of mine! They will amuse themselves for a minute or two. They need not listen unless they like. What do your lawyer friends think of the practice?"

"They think and say that no law in the statute book was ever intended to be applied in any such way. They think it is ingenious cruelty to stretch the law and wrap it about a man in any such way: and it would be generally thought so in regard to any other offence. Suppose, for instance, a fellow in the street,—an enemy of mine,—sees me eating my supper, and throws a stone through my window, and knocks me off my seat:—what would any just and humane person think of me if, after getting the man punished for the offence against my person, I were to obtain an additional penalty for the breaking the window? As yonder gentleman said, 'I have the power;' or I may have it, for aught I know: but would not you call me a brute for hunting the culprit down for the difference between a shut and an open window,—punishing him twice for what was, in intent, one offence?"

“ Well, now—a case, a case ! Never mind my friends ! They will amuse themselves very well ; and there is the chaplain to tell them stories, you see.”

“ I hope, Sir, you will use your influence . . . .”

“ Ay, ay ! To prevent his suffering for his zeal. I understand. Now—a case, as I said before.”

The governor told how Waterston had undergone a second term of two months ; and how a third was hanging over him, if the surveyor of taxes should be put upon his track by the parties who had already punished him. The tax-surveyor had no option in such a case. He was obliged to sue for the penalties in any case of shooting game without a certificate.

“ Ah ! that’s bad,” observed Mr. Mereworth. “ He can recover nothing from a poor wretch of that class. ‘Tis a farce to try.”

“ ‘Tis a tragedy to witness,” declared the governor.

“ There is not, I suppose, a man in the jail,” observed Mr. Mereworth, “ that does not see that a fiscal law, like the Game Certificate Act, was never made for the punishment of poaching.”

“ To be sure,” agreed the governor. “ They all know that what was meant as a revenue protection, and never intended to apply to poor labourers, is

made a means of vengeance by the game-preservers. These gentlemen first lay on the worst they can under the law made for their purposes; and then they use another law and its officer to press another punishment on their victim, without any advantage to the purposes of that law."

"The surveyor of taxes would be glad to avoid such applications, no doubt: and, for my part, I am glad not to be a surveyor of taxes in a district where such things are done,—unless he could get the eye of the Secretary of State . . . ."

"There's what I want," eagerly observed the governor. "That is why I hoped the magistrates would have permitted me to report, till they had collected such a body of cases . . . ."

"They!" cried Mr. Mereworth, chuckling. "You might as well ask the fox to go before the farmer with the gosling in his mouth, and ask him to mend his pales. However, don't be disheartened. There are other people that can get the eye of the Secretary of State, as you will find when you have the classification you want."

"I shall thank God when that day comes, Sir, as devoutly as if I got any clergyman to say it for me. Now, if you and the other gentlemen will please to come this way, I will show you."

And the governor led the way to the day-room;

but when there, observed to Mr. Mereworth that the case he had in view was not to be seen there ; the lad was no doubt on the tread-wheel.

Luke was on the wheel ; and there he was pointed out to the magistrates as a prisoner merely for want of bail.

“ At labour ? ” asked Mr. Mereworth.

“ Yes ; we have the power,” observed Sir Allan Boyd.

“ Not only so,” said the governor : “ but it is imperative on the magistrate to commit this lad, in default of sureties, for six months with hard labour. The magistrate may, for the real offence, give him one month instead of three : but he cannot give him less than six, with hard labour, for what is no offence in a day-labourer,—his being unable to find bail.”

“ You remember, Sir Allan,” said Mr. Mereworth, “ I would not believe our clerk when he told us such was the law.”

“ Yes, I do not forget,” said Sir Allan Boyd.

“ And I have found plenty of people since,” continued Mr. Mereworth, “ who could no more credit it than I could at first. I went about from lawyer to lawyer ; and all the comfort they could give me was that this is the only case in the whole range of English law in which magistrates have

the power to require sureties not to commit the offence again ; and to impose imprisonment with hard labour in default of finding sureties."

" We have only to fulfil the law, and not to make remarks upon it," pronounced Major Lowe.

" Why, I don't know," observed Mr. Mereworth. " If any law, and above all any special law, as one may call the game-law, works ill, I am disposed to think the State will be thankful to hear about it. Besides fulfilling the law, I am disposed to think it my duty to observe and report upon its working. How does that lad get on, Mr. Saville?"

" He is getting hardened and ruined, every day, Sir. You see the grin on his face now. He came in with a long face enough, poor fellow : but he has been in bad company here ; and I have my opinion as to what will happen when he gets out."

" When you can secure some classification . . ." observed Sir Allan Boyd.

The governor did not speak till he found his opinion was desired. Then he said

" That will be some improvement : but it will be bad enough still for lads in for taking hares. If we consider that one third of our commitments are poaching cases, this shows but a bad prospect still for a lad, as to the company he must keep here."

“ One third,—is that your proportion, eh ? ” asked Mr. Mereworth.

“ An alarming prevalence of crime,” observed Sir Allan Boyd, “ and a great expense to the county.”

“ I hope you are aware,” put in Major Lowe, “ that the expense of the prosecution is the prosecutor’s.”

“ Yes ; I have sound reasons for remembering that. But if crime continues to increase at this rate, we shall really not know which way to turn ourselves. We shall have to build jails for poachers,—for one class of criminals.”

“ I was thinking,” observed Mr. Mereworth, “ that it might answer better to have prisons for our hares and pheasants, and let the men go at large instead.”

“ Those prisons might be raised at less cost,” observed the governor. “ Something less expensive than stone walls and iron doors might serve.”

“ And then,” said Mr. Mereworth, “ sportsmen might enjoy a battue at any time. The scene and the game would be always in readiness, eh ? Whether the folk would pay the expense out of the county rate might be a question: but I should advise them, most sincerely, as their wisest way —Eh ? ”

“ It will be cheaper, no doubt, than maintaining one third of the prisoners we have, and sending nearly all their families to the workhouse.”

Sir Allan Boyd and the major were heard inquiring of each other whether this was not all nonsense about the number of poachers. Mr. Mereworth told them that it was in their own department to learn the proportion in their own district: but he could inform them that the number of convictions for game-offences in the preceding year, in England alone, was between four and five thousand, of which all but less than a couple of hundred took place at petty or quarter sessions.

Sir Allan Boyd observed that this was a striking confirmation of his view of the depravity of the age; in which the major emphatically agreed.

“ Never mind ! ” said Mr. Mereworth, smiling at the expression of annoyance in the governor’s face on hearing this observation. “ You will never get them past that conclusion. But never mind ! There is another sort of people in the world,—plenty of people who are not blinded by the flapping of birds before their eyes, or deafened by the popping of guns at the hares, you know. Eh ? So, you will report to me what you like, you know ; and I shall be obliged to you for it, at

any time. Well, now,—where next? No more cumulative penalty cases to-day, I hope. Eh?"

"I wish, Sir, you would keep us clear of such till you come again; or as long as you are on the bench."

"And why should I not,—to some extent at least? If I could learn the facts in time, you know. 'Tis a custom with tender-hearted men to shirk game-cases, you are aware: and I have done that myself too much. But if I could see a way .... If it is only taking bad bail, in a case or two, here and there ...."

"For God's sake, Sir, take any bail you will to keep young men out of this place! I don't myself believe that any bail serves its proper purpose where labourers have got into poaching ways: but however that may be, for the offender himself, and everybody else, it is better that he should not lie here for want of sureties."

"Well: just forget those two rash words I spoke just now;" and he whispered 'bad bail:' "rather curious words from a man in my office to one in yours. Just forget them; and remember to report to me, as a friend, anything that strikes you:—anything that strikes you particularly, you know. Eh?"

The governor bowed.

One of the incidents which struck him was the indifference with which Luke parted with old Killip. When Killip went out, he said to Luke that he had taken an interest in him on their first meeting ; and had hoped that it would prove the beginning of an acquaintance which might be useful and agreeable to both. But he had feared of late that Luke preferred the society of a much lower order of companions. If so, their present parting would be final, and he could not hope to be of use to him, as an old man might to a young man,—both following the same way of life.—To this Luke had replied that he had no doubt of getting on very well, with such friends as he had :— that there were ways open for young men of spirit, and friends to be had.—On this, Killip had shaken his head, and walked off without further adieu.

Another noticeable incident was that old Groves appeared, about the middle of May, to effect Luke's release. Few men had more experience of the variations of human moods and tempers than Groves : but even he was surprised, and almost disconcerted, by the change in Luke's mind and manners.

“ What, are you speaking to me ? ” said Luke, with a stare. “ You talk as if I was a baby.”

“ Dear me, no, lad : that’s your fancy. Who could look at a man six feet high, and take him for a baby ? ”

“ You do, though,” said Luke, turning away.

“ That’s all my sympathy,” declared Groves. “ There never was such a fool as me for sympathy. When I see people in trouble, I feel so full of sympathy that it goes off in a sort of coaxing of them.”

“ I’m not in any trouble ; so don’t coax me.”

“ To be sure, your trouble is over now. You can go home now. You are going with me ; and a merry trot home we will have.”

“ I don’t know that, Groves. You’ve not treated me so that you have a right to settle my goings and doings.”

“ Well ! this is gratitude ! ” exclaimed Groves.

But Luke went on to tell his causes of complaint about the neglect of his club, when he had been taken in their service, ending with his now usual conclusion, that there were other ways open, and other friends, for young men of spirit.—All the while, however, there was a pulling at his heart,—a yearning which contradicted his assumed resolution,—which betrayed itself in his sullen voice, and put some little irresolution into his dogged manner.

"Well, my lad, as you please," said Groves, cheerfully. "I came to do you a service, thinking you would like to be out before the mowing, and before Onslow has taken on a stranger in your place. But you can please yourself. Only, I will warn you, as a friend, that no man that becomes an enemy to the club, after being one of us, can stay beside us. If you prefer your new friends, whoever they be, you must go and live beside them. We don't want them, or you either, in our parts."

"But I must go and live with granny and Bell."

"If you come with me,—well and good. If not, you stay here, and they go into the union; and then, after two months, you will be sent out from here adrift, to find the friends you speak of."

Luke could not bear this. The mere sight of the old poacher had brought back images of the meadows and corn-fields and lanes, where their business had taken them together: and now, the thought of the old cottage and its inmates melted him. He could not refuse to go and see them this very day. He suddenly felt it would be a terrible thing to stay within these prison walls for two months longer.

He sullenly took up his hat, and peevishly made a sign to Groves to go first. During the

final preparations for leaving, Groves found one or two sly opportunities of recognising an old acquaintance here and there, with whom he indulged in a wink at Luke's testiness, and a whisper that the lad would come to.

This coming to began to appear even before they left the jail. When some of the least disciplined prisoners looked melancholy at the thought of the free air and liberty, Luke began to feel some lightness of heart, and to relax in his ungraciousness to his liberator.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE HOME.

LUKE had never before felt so strangely as when he arrived within a mile or two of home. As his mind was awakened, his eyes were opened. The flowers were so sweet in the meadows, and the water of the river flowed so clear, and the landscape looked so extremely wide, and the rustle of the trees in the mild wind was so pleasant, that he felt as if he had never really seen the place before, though he knew his way perfectly well. Groves threw out his little jokes the more freely the more he saw that Luke's ill-humour gave way; and by the time they came in sight of the beershop, Luke felt that this was the pleasantest walk he had ever taken.

At the door of the beershop they stopped, and Groves said, in a low voice,

“ I won’t detain you here now, my lad, for more reasons than one.”

He winked, and slightly nodded sideways, to

point out a man who was standing near, talking with Satchell. "Police," whispered Groves:—an intimation which made Luke fix his eyes eagerly upon the man; for he had heard so much in prison about the police that there was no sort of persons that he was more curious to see.

"There now, lad; that will do for this time," observed Groves. "If you look at him in that way,—much as if you were going to eat him—you will get his notice and ill-will; which would be a pity: for you and he need be no better acquainted than you are, if you continue a prudent lad. The police have nothing to do with the game, you know."

Luke continued his stare.

"Now, go your ways home," said Groves. "I don't ask you in here till you have seen your granny and Bell."

Luke started.

"What, you thought I did not remember your little sister's name? That shows how little you are aware of my interest for you.—A nice little sister is Bell! Now, be off to her! And don't be down-hearted if you find them somewhat poorly off. You can come to me, at any time: and I can usually find you a profitable job. Look on me as your friend . . . ."

“ Why, I don’t know,” said Luke, recalling his injuries and discontents.

“ Well ; if you don’t know now, you will know when you find I don’t press you hard for your debt to me ; nor let Satchell press you hard for your debt to him,—which is no great affair. We will let you get your granny up in the world a bit first ; and then we’ll see how handy you will be to do us a turn. Good bye, my boy.”

As soon as Luke was alone, he began to long to meet somebody he knew,—yet with a slight misgiving as to the sort of reception he might meet with on issuing from a jail. He wished he might fall in with Waterston, or some other member of the club. As it happened, however, the first person he met was Mr. Sleath, driving Mrs. Sleath in the phaeton. Luke turned his back, and pretended to be looking into the hedge, and his heart beat as if it would choke him. But there was no need for all this agitation.—Nobody was thinking about him. The servant behind never once turned his head : and Luke went on his way.

Next, he saw Mr. Onslow approaching on foot. Luke crossed over, to avoid him ; and pretended to be looking into the ditch on the opposite side of the road. But this time he did not escape.

When he stole a look round, he saw that Mr. Onslow was observing him.

“I thought it was you,” said the farmer, “by your studying the ditch, as you seem so fond of doing. Perhaps you would be glad of some ditch-work, as you were once before.”

Luke said, settling his cap on his head, that he did not care much about that.

“Then, if you don’t care, you ought to care, my lad. By that silly speech of yours, it is plain you are out of work: and a man of your sort must care about work, or thieve or starve. One word, and then we will let bygones be bygones. How long have you been at large?—You have not been home yet?—are only now on your way home? Get home then; and when you want honest work and honest bread, come to me.”

Luke did not thank him. He wanted to utter his new saying about ways open to young men of spirit, and new friends, but the farmer had walked on.

Next he saw a labourer with whom he used to work at farmer Eyre’s; and to this man he spoke shyly: but the man merely asked him how long he had been out of prison, just as he would have asked him what o’clock it was, nodded, and passed on.

Thus far, it appeared that if nobody was yet particularly glad to see him, nobody shunned him, and Luke took heart, and began to whistle.

The moment he did so, a little girl who was crossing a field near the road turned sharp round. Luke was looking over her head towards the woods behind, whose oaks were now golden with their bursting foliage, while the other trees showed the vivid green of their newly expanded leaves. Luke was not thinking of the beauty of the trees, nor yet of the ragged girl who stood still in the middle of the field; but of the pheasants' eggs that were no doubt in that wood, and what crop farmer Frith was this year probably growing near those covers.

When he resumed his whistle, however, the figure of the girl caught his attention. She began to run as if to meet him at the stile. Luke slackened his pace; but did not know who this bare-footed child could be. Even when she came near enough to call him by his name, he felt strangely confused and uncertain. She was like Bell in some respects; but so small and squalid were her face and figure, her hair was so rough and sun-dried, her eyes were so sunk, her lips so thin, her countenance was so old and her appearance otherwise so childish, that her brother could

not feel certain whether it was Bell or not, till she exclaimed

“O ! Luke, are you come home ?”

Still feeling awkward, he only said, rather coldly, “I’m going there now.”

“Then, Luke, stay and help us ! Don’t go away any more !”

“I don’t want to go away,” said Luke. “They took me away. I did not want to go.”

“Then don’t let them take you any more. You will find granny sadly cross : but then, she is so weakly and thin !”

“And how thin and little you are, Bell ! I did not know you when you came across the field.”

“I knew you by your whistle. I hope it will do granny good to hear your whistle again. Luke, if you could only get her a little tea ! She can’t do well without her tea : and I think it is the want of that that makes her so—so . . . .”

“What,—she is sadly cross, is she ?”

“Why yes, she is. But she is old now to be so poorly off ; to be so cold as we were all the winter. We had such a bad winter ! And it does not seem any better, now summer is coming. The rain floods the house so ; and . . . . There she is,—see !”

They were now within view of the cottage ; and

Luke saw with amazement that granny was actually on a ladder, doing something to the thatch.

“Granny up a ladder!” said he.

“She can’t rest or keep still,” declared Bell. “She is always after something or other that is too hard for her, instead of letting me do it.”

“And you don’t look able for much, Bell.”

“If we could only get something more to eat,—we don’t care what,—if we could only get a good meal now and then, I should not mind what I had to do. But stop a minute. Wait till granny comes down the ladder, or she’ll get a fall, if she sees you suddenly. And don’t whistle till she is down. And Luke,—if you could seem glad to see her . . . more glad than you seem to be to see me . . .”

“I tell you I did not know you,” said Luke, turning sulky, he could not have told why. It did not make him better, but worse, that he saw Bell pretend to look behind her, that she might draw her hand across her eyes. He could not help watching granny trying to mend the rotten thatch, which came to pieces under her shaking hands faster than she could put in fresh. She had but little straw. The rest of her material was grass and heath from the common. But it

mattered but little what it was. Granny had no strength to tie it well in: and Bell told her brother that the rain came in worst where the thatch had been what granny called mended.—As matters were evidently growing worse every minute, and granny quarrelling more and more with the thatch, Bell wished, if she only dared, to go and speak to granny, and say that she had heard that Luke would soon be home; and he would mend the thatch, and do many other things.

After some persuasion, Bell ventured; and Luke slipped out of sight, behind an outhouse of the Clarks'. There he could catch the shrill though now feeble tones of the old woman, and had the comfort of hearing her ask Bell how Luke was ever to mend thatch or do any other good, when he was a fool and always after mischief, instead of his duty.

As it could not be intelligible to Luke that such expressions arose from the irritation of baffled affection for him, they did not further Bell's wish that he would meet granny with affection. He put on his most careless and dogged manner, and followed granny into the cottage much as if he had come in discontented from an ordinary day's work.

Bell had but just time to say "Here is Luke!" before he crossed the threshold. If he had looked with only the most transient glance in that withered face,—so all alive with pain,—he must have said or done something kind. But shame prevented his once looking at her: and he was not nice enough in his feelings to detect the struggles of fondness which mingled tremulous tones from the heart with the sharp wranglings which came only from the temper or the suffering of the worn out frame.

"So, you are come home!" was her greeting. "And a pretty home it is to come to! A pretty home you have made it for your grandmother, and the young ones you ought to have been working for all this time!"

Luke muttered that he had been working harder than any of them, all this time, he would be bound. There was no want of hard work where he had been.

"Then," said Bell, timidly, "it will be like play to you now to work and get granny some tea. She has had no tea such a long while!"

"Hold your silly tongue about the tea," said granny. "Look at the condition we are in, and then talk of tea! Look at those children, Luke, in their bare feet, and tell me what your mother

would have said that her pretty babies, always so nice and well-tended, should have come to this ! ”

And she passed her hand over Bell’s rough hair, and showed her worn-out frock with such a twitch that she made another rent in it. Luke would not look : so she pointed out how the water came in between the walls and the floor ;—that floor being now chiefly mud. A few bricks remained ; and some holes were filled up with stones : but the rest was mud. Granny went on,

“ It is a bad sight for us when the clouds gather. If there comes rain, there is no sleep for us that night. If it is not much, I have to mop it up as it comes in. If it is heavy rain, we have to dig a hole, and let the water run in, to keep any part dry. And then the roof . . . . ”

“ I wouldn’t stay in such a place,” said Luke. “ Such a place I never saw.”

“ And where are we to go, you dunce ! We have paid no rent, these three quarters past : and the landlord was angry before that we had left off being regular. So we can’t say a word about repairs ; and here we must lie and rot in the damp. And you talk of our not staying here !—you who have not earned me a penny since last August ! And where would it please you to live, you dunce ? ”

“ Anywhere away from a scolding tongue. I’ll take care of myself: and there’s the workhouse for you. There’s no rain comes in there.”

“ O ! hush ! hush ! ” cried Bell, coming in between them. Luke now looked up, and was startled to see granny’s face of speechless rage, as she clenched her trembling hand, and seemed to want only the power to kill him on the spot. He blurted out

“ Why, granny, you are crazy, I think.”

“ Why, hush, Luke ! ” exclaimed Bell.

But the rough words appeared to have a strange effect. Granny turned away, saying

“ Well, perhaps I am crazy. I’ve enough to make me so.”

She went to the tumbledown cupboard, and took out the only food there was in the house,—the bottom crust of a loaf, very dry. She gave Bell the tin-pot which once upon a time held beer; and Bell went out to fill it with water, while granny spread the remains of a white cloth upon a stool which was now their only table.

Luke thought he had found the way to manage granny; and the more because, as he was thinking so, she came behind him, and stroked his head, as she passed to the door. This apparent surrender determined him to carry himself high,

that the peace might be kept towards him. So he made mouths at the dry bread, and looked round him with unconcealed disgust. Granny, who watched every turn of his eye, came and leaned with one hand on the stool, while she said

“The place looks badly, don’t it, dear?”

“Such a place I never saw.”

“And I am afraid you are hungry, dear. And I dare say you have been used to something better than that.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Luke, throwing away the last bit of the crust through the empty lattice-frame.

“My dear, don’t do that,” said granny.

“Here it is, granny,” said Bell, who had picked it up as she passed the window.

“It is all we have for Job when he comes in. I hope he may have found something to eat in the fields, or that somebody may have given him a bit of bread to-day,” observed granny.

“Job earns a trifle now,” said Bell to Luke, who seemed resolved to ask no questions. “He is crow-boy at Mr. Eyre’s. He is out all day; but he does come home terribly hungry sometimes.”

She stopped, hoping that Luke would inquire about Dan. But he did not; so she went on.

“Dan will be in presently. He is at the allot-

ment. He is growing such a pretty boy, Luke! When he used to have his Sunday things on . . . ”

“ Ah! he has nothing for Sundays now,” sighed granny.

“ Why don’t you take care of the allotment? ” asked Luke. “ You have that besides Job’s pay.”

“ Only go and look at it! ” said granny. “ Only do you try if you can make anything grow on it. Almost everything is eaten as clean off as if nothing had been sown. Sometimes I think the little boys eat a few of the vegetables, as they keep watch there.”

“ And if they do, ”—said Bell.

“ Pray when did you ever hear me take them to task about it, child? Do you think I’ve no pity for hungry growing boys, with vegetables in the ground before their eyes? Don’t you be lecturing me! —And you—you lazy brute, ” and she turned upon Luke, “ there you sit, as if we were all made to serve you, instead of starving because you chose to get into mischief! Get up, I say! Get up, and go about earning your bread! ”

“ I sha’n’t get up till I please, ” declared Luke. “ I have walked a long way to-day: and I shall rest when I please, and work when I please.”

Bell, with heaving breast and choking voice,

here put in, "Luke,—only remember, Luke,—if granny seems sharp . . . ."

"I sharp!" screamed granny.

"If she does seem to speak hardly, remember what a hard time she has had of it ever since you were away. If you knew how cold we were on winter nights, and how she has scarcely any clothes left, and, (I will say, Luke,) how she missed you, many a time, and we all thought we should come right when you got home!—And it *was* you that brought us down so very low, though you might not mean it. And now that you are come back, you don't seem so kind to granny as she thought; and she has much to vex her . . . ."

Bell could not utter a word more.

Granny said she did not mean to be sharp. Luke made no answer, but sat stock still.

"If you go to work directly, my boy, and we all try to take heart, and do our best . . . ."

And now, she could not go on.

Luke did not like the silence, with no sound but of struggling sobs; so he spoke.

"Of course, I shall go to work, as soon as I can get it. You know that very well. But that won't make much difference. You were going down very badly before last August."

"Your wages are not enough to make us comfortable, my boy ;—and we don't expect any one to earn enough to make us all comfortable. But think what we have lost by your being away! Think what a loss your wages, your eight shillings a week, for three quarters of a year and more is to us. 'Tis sixteen pounds or thereabouts. I have reckoned it many and many a time. Or if you had had only seven shillings a week for some of those months, still it is a great difference to us. Taking out of it your victuals, and a pair of shoes for you, and a few matters besides, still we have been hard put to it without those few shillings a week."

"What is father about? Has not he sent you anything?"

"Yes,—at Christmas. He meant it for rent. But I could not let it go to the landlord, we were so in want of clothes. I did long to get the children a bit of meat; but I dared not."

"And granny would not have any tea, though father desired she would," said Bell. "Where are you going, Luke? Let me go with you to the allotment to see Dan."

"No, not to-night," said Luke. "I shall see them both to-morrow, you know."

"To-morrow!" exclaimed granny.

"Why, I can't stop the night in such a place as this," said Luke. "I shall go to work in the morning, and I 'll come home to dinner."

And off he went, settling his cap on his head, to carry off his feelings of awkwardness and shame.

"Can't stop the night in such a place as this!" muttered granny, in a tone of misery which Bell could not stand. She ran out, saying that she would just step to Dan, and they would be home in a minute.

She was far from being home in a minute, though equally far from neglecting granny.—She felt so as if her heart was bursting, that she leaned her head on her arms on the little gate of their allotment, and cried more desperately than she had ever done in her life. Her heart beat, and her head throbbed so that she did not hear the sound of horses' feet in the road: nor did she know that it was to her that a voice spoke, till somebody touched her shoulder with the end of a riding-whip. When she looked up, there were two gentlemen on horseback, and a groom behind.

At sight of her face, Mr. Holloway, who was one of the gentlemen, threw his rein to the groom,

and desired him to take his horse. He would walk home this fine evening.

“Now, my girl,” said he, “tell me what is the matter. You know who I am?”

“Yes, Sir; the clergyman.”

“You know that by going to church?”

“Yes, Sir; we used to go every Sunday, till we had no clothes fit for it.”

It was a god-send to Bell, Mr. Holloway passing this way at the moment. She could not resist opening her whole heart to him.

“Let us come in here,” said Mr. Holloway, pointing to the next allotment to granny’s. “I know I may come here. I am the landlord, and know the people well.”

He was rather surprised to find that Bell had a right to enter the next. She first sent Dan home, warning him that there was but a very little bit of bread for his supper; and bidding him not ask granny for any more. Dan whimpered, and said he was so hungry he did not know what to do: but Mr. Holloway told him not to cry, and not to trouble his grandmother, and his sister should bring him another piece of bread presently. Whereupon Dan pulled his fore-lock, and trotted home briskly.

Everything now came out,—except that granny

was cross and Luke rude. Bell had no thought of concealing the nature of Luke's offence against the law; and indeed she was anxious, for his credit, to have it understood that it was only about the game. She added that she had been taught never to say anything to any gentleman against the game, as gentlemen did not like to hear it: but perhaps some of them knew that the poor who had gardens bore no good will to the game.

“Had your brother any reason to bear ill-will to the game?” inquired Mr. Holloway.

“Look here, Sir! You may see something of what they do,—the hares and pheasants; though not so much as you might have seen last year, because this year we could not afford to do so well by the ground. But we had a patch of cauliflowers,—(here, Sir, this square piece); this was grown with as fine cauliflowers as ever you saw:—the neighbours will all tell you so:—and every one of them was eaten off:—there were hardly the stalks left. And now, look where we sowed our peas!”

“Have you paid rent for a place in this condition?—Don't be afraid to answer. You shall not be the worse for anything you tell me. Did you pay rent last year?”

“ Yes, Sir,—very nearly all. We paid all we could get from selling our table: but we had to beg for a little time; and we have not paid up yet. Some of the neighbours advised us to part with it: but, when Luke was away, it was the only thing between us and the workhouse. And granny won’t hear of going there.”

“ Why did not you come to me ? ”

“ They say gentlemen do not like to hear complaints of the game: and if we had come, we must have complained of the game.”

“ And then you feared being turned out.”

“ Yes, Sir.”

“ Did you ever think of taking the hares and pheasants that came and ate your vegetables ? ”

“ No, Sir, indeed, we never did such a thing as touch one of them, I assure you. We did nothing but frighten them away.”

“ But you might. Did not you know that ? Yes, you had a right to take them on your own ground. Only on this bit of ground,—not anywhere else ;—not as Luke did.”

“ But what would the gentlemen have said ? ”

“ Who ? I ? I should be very glad.—But I forgot ;—there is the certificate.”

“ The what, please, Sir ? ”

“ The certificate. Tell me ;—do you think

your brothers could take hares and pheasants enough here, on this ground, to make it worth while to pay between three and four pounds a year for liberty to do so?"

"Three or four pounds!" exclaimed Bell, in a tone which conveyed, "You might as well talk of their paying away a fortune." She then added, "And Mr. Treherne bears no good will to anybody who touches the game, or so much as mentions it."

"I do not see what Mr. Treherne has to do with your affairs. O! I understand: he is a magistrate; and you are afraid of him about Luke.—Now, you may leave this matter to me. I will speak to my steward about it.—Is that where you live?—that cottage?"

"Yes, Sir, that is our cottage."

"I will go home with you, and see your grandmother and Luke."

Bell explained that Luke was not there: and Mr. Holloway saw that a visit now would not be acceptable.

He did not for a moment harbour a suspicion of deception. He saw that Bell was no beggar; and the allotment spoke for itself. He asked Bell to tell him why she wished him not to go: and she told him that her grandmother was

above what she seemed, and that she was cruelly ashamed to have the place seen in its present wretched state. If Luke got work, they might, perhaps, considering the season, mend their affairs a little, and put the cottage in a better condition for a gentleman to enter.

“ Then the best thing I can do is to ask Mr. Onslow whether he can give your brother work.”

“ O, Sir, if you would do that ! ”

“ Mr. Onslow is kind, and a good neighbour to the poor.”

“ Yes ; everybody thinks so, Sir.—But, Sir, will you please to tell me one thing more ? May we really take the creatures that come on our allotment or not ? Because if Luke made any mistake about it, he might be put into prison again.”

“ Have you any rabbits there ? ”

“ They do a deal of mischief, Sir ; and almost all the year round.”

“ You might legally take rabbits. They are not game. And, by law, you might take hares and pheasants : but then, you must have a certificate,—and that would cost you between three and four pounds.”

“ O ! then I will tell Luke, may I, Sir, to ask you, if his acquaintance keep on telling him, as

they used to do, that he has a right to all the wild animals that come on the ground ? ”

“ Yes ; you may refer him to me. And now, my girl, you may go and buy a loaf with this sixpence, and give your little brother a good slice of it. And I will keep watch against the hares here . . . . ”

“ You, Sir ! And it is near dark now. They will hardly come any more till sunrise.”

“ Very well. You may go.”

As she went, Bell looked behind her ; and presently she came back, curtseying and looking almost afraid to say what she wanted,—which was that perhaps Mr. Holloway would be so kind as to see that the gate was not left open. If the pigs got in, as they once did, the potatoes would be all spoiled.

As soon as Bell was out of hearing, Mr. Holloway called to a man who was at work in a neighbouring allotment, and asked him if he knew anything of the Voiles and their grandmother.

The man told him all he knew.

“ I am disposed to think the more of what you tell me,” said Mr. Holloway, “ because you do not seem fond of these people.”

“ I bear them no ill will, Sir,” replied Grant :

“but, as to being fond of them, there’s not much of that anywhere about here. The old woman does not let anybody be fond of her, if they were ever so ready. She is not a pleasant neighbour. But people leave her pretty much to her own ways, now she has got to be so bad in her temper. We think she is past helping it now,—a little wrong or so.”

“ From distress ? ”

“ From going down in the world, and fear of the Union. And that is like to drive the lad abroad, you see, Sir. And the little ones seem apt to grow rather sly, having no comfort when they are with her, and nobody to be kind to them. —I only mean the little boys, Sir. I don’t mean the girl. She is a nice little girl, I believe: and everybody is sorry for her.”

“ Such things ought not to go on without my knowledge. They or their friends ought to have applied to me long ago.”

“ You see, Sir, they could not go to church when they were brought down to their present state, as to clothes and so on. And then, there was the fear of losing their allotment if they made any complaint.”

“ What can they think me made of, to have such a fear as that ? ”

“ Why, you see, Sir, a gentleman, and particularly a clergyman, who is seen with a gun out shooting is not very likely to hear of what is thought and suffered about the game in his own parish. Gentlemen that are fond of sport are known not to like to hear complaints of the game: and the poor would rather suffer than get the ill-will of the gentry.”

This was a home-truth for a kind-hearted clergyman to hear. It kept him silent while Grant went on,

“ And the old woman is very high. She holds on, my wife and I say, in hopes that the house will fall and bury them, or the end of the world will come, or something, to prevent her having to beg.”

“ Or go to the workhouse.”

“ O ! no fear of her going there ! We should find them all five stark dead on the floor before she would go there, or let any one of them speak of such a thing.”

“ How to help them ? ” thought Mr. Holloway. “ To get work for the young man is the first thing.”

Grant thought this was about all that could be done at present, unless it was excusing their rent for the allotment.

“ That is of course,” declared Mr. Holloway.

“I see that it cannot possibly answer to them, exposed as it is. If anybody pays rent, it ought to be the owner of the game.—But where is the difficulty of doing more for these poor people?”

“If the truth were known, Sir, I have no doubt the girl will hide that loaf of bread from her granny, to avoid a scolding for taking charity. She will take care that the old woman has a good slice of it;—no fear of that: but she will somehow make it seem to come in ordinary course. And granny’s eyes are not over good now, nor her head over clear.—I should think, Sir, you might have a better chance of helping them when winter comes on, if you please to bear it in mind....”

“I shall not forget.”

“Always supposing, Sir, that the lad gets work meantime, to find them in food.”

“I must see farmer Onslow to-night.—Just step in here, Grant, and show me what you consider the extent of damage done by rabbits and game this season.”

Grant was all the more ready to do this as it made an opening for him to declare and exhibit his own losses from the same cause.

As Mr. Holloway walked to farmer Onslow’s by

the light of the young moon, he felt that he had received as severe a lesson in morals as he was often called on to give. Because he carried a gun in the season, and was the companion of the neighbouring squires, he was excluded from the most important departments of his office,—of the sacred office which he had hitherto hoped he was discharging with a sufficient fidelity. He now found that the complaint of the oppressed, the misery of the poor and needy, the dangers and temptations of the ignorant and the weak were withheld from him, the pastor of the parish, through fear of disturbing his pleasures or irritating his prejudices. The dreadful subserviency implied in this shocked him: and when he contemplated the tyranny into which he had been entrapped,—he who should have been recognized all this time as the defender of the poor,—he felt that he had been as truly ensnared by the game system, as unconsciously plunged into sin by it, as the most ignorant poacher in his parish.

“And all for what?” thought he. A sort of shiver of delight came over him as the images and sensations of sport rose up before his imagination;—the autumnal morning, balmy and genial as the dew dried off under the low sun, and the light mists from the earth were every moment changing

into silvery clouds in the sky ; and the fading leaves floated gently down the still air ; and the falling nut directed the eye to the passage of the brisk but quiet squirrel ; and the only sounds heard were the call of the wagoner to his team in the lanes, or of the ploughman ploughing up the stubbles, till the whirr of a pheasant from copse or hedge was the signal for a shot. He saw,—he felt, in retrospect or anticipation, the delicious scene of the pointer in the field, the hint, the suspense, the discovery, the achievement ; the lightness of heart, the gaiety of spirit, the glow of health, the grateful love of nature which attend on field sports. He felt the sense of good-humoured fellowship with comrades : he heard the laugh of pleased rustics ; and remembered how the refreshing influence of these stirring and delicious recreations extended into subsequent months of study and professional anxiety.

“ These are very good things,” thought he. “ But there are many good things which may be bought too dear. I trust the pleasure, great as it is, would not have blinded me so long. It was the health and refreshment, and good-fellowship with all parties which beguiled me. But now I see something of the horrors hidden under this system, I cannot persuade myself but that not only is the

pleasure unlawful, but the real and substantial benefits are the seed of a harvest of curses. They must all be foregone, by me for one; or at least in this parish.—Looking at it calmly and without exaggeration, however, what must I give up? I may go, every two or three years, to the Scotch moors, or somewhere else, where I may refresh myself even better than here. And if not, autumn and winter will be autumn and winter still. If, on these May evenings, it is enough to look at yonder crescent moon and the evening star, and to walk beside the springing corn, and listen near the woods for the nightingale, or float in my skiff down the full and flowing river, or defy it with a strenuous oar;—if these pleasures suffice for other seasons, are there not enough that are innocent in those hitherto marked by sport? Nature remains; and, in its way, sport remains,—exercises enough to stir the blood, and rouse the faculties, and kindle a common emotion in high and low, under the smile of the great mother of them all.—We have left . . . . But shame on me for reckoning up the pleasures of the rich in the same day that I have seen the hardships of the poor! To think that any Christian, whether pastor or disciple, should turn from the damp hovel, the meagre face, the feeble voice, the

tattered clothes, the tortured heart, the stung temper, the hardened conscience of the poor, to reckon up the foreign tours, the rural rides, the libraries, the picture galleries and portfolios, the operas, the cruizes, the conservatories, the horticulture of the rich, and ask whether these last can dispense with the one other pleasure which they find corrupts, torments and exasperates the poor ! To think that there can be such a question at all in a Christian land ! To think that I can for one moment have harboured it ! I to whom have been permitted other blessings, most deeply felt, but impossible to be even conceived of by those whom I have helped to injure ! Does it not transcend all that I have said to have a keen intellectual eye, and an enlightened spiritual sense,—such as the educated must not deny is given to them ? If I, by the culture appointed to me, am privileged to see more than the clown, or the mere sportsman, in the forms and hues and movements of nature ;—if the song of birds and the waving of corn and the gush of waters convey more to me than to them ;—if also I have hours of vivid enjoyment beside my lamp, from fresh or venerable ideas, from delicious imaginations, or enticing analysis, of which they have no more comprehension than the deaf and

dumb of the charms of conversation ;—if, while they are drowning the hours in wine, or beer, or sleep, I am tasting the relish of pleasures worthy of heaven, am I dallying with the regrets of parting with one single pleasure more ? If from this moment I ever again harbour for one instant a thought of such base ingratitude and covetousness, if ever again one impulse of companionship, one prompting of habit, entices the idea of carrying my gun in this district, may I be hereafter the Dives of a whole eternity, in the sight of men and angels, and every one of the poor under my charge a Lazarus, to whom I may humble myself for a drop of solace amidst my fiery remorse !—That I should never have seen this till now is condemnation enough ;—condemnation of the system first and chiefly ; but also of myself for not having explored its bearings. Thank God I see something of them now : and from the rest, and from declaring them, I will not flinch.”

He almost doubted whether it was not too late for a call on a man of early hours, like Onslow. But he felt he could not rest this night without doing something ; and there were lights in the windows which showed that the family had not all gone to rest.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE FARM-HOUSE PARLOUR.

FARMER Onslow was at his books: and his wife, who had grown very sleepy over the stockings she was mending, was hoping he would soon have done his entries and calculations, while admitting to herself what an excellent thing it was that her husband was such a careful man about his accounts. She should make no hand of it in her own department without him; though he could clearly convey to her, from time to time, how their affairs stood, and kindly took pains to do so. While nodding over this thought, her husband told her that somebody was at the front door, and went to see who it was: and then she shook herself awake, in some surprise, when she found it was the clergyman.

Mr. Holloway would not let her bring supper, or wine, or any refreshment whatever, troubled as she was at an abstinence so little intelligible in a farm-house. He said his business would be briefly told: and so it was.

"There can be no difficulty about that, Sir," declared Mr. Onslow. "I told the lad himself, this afternoon, that when he wanted honest work, he had only to come to me for it."

"You told him so? Then God bless you! Can you give me any idea what he is capable of earning? I ask out of no impertinence to you, but . . . ."

"Ay! ay! Sir: you wish to know the prospects of the lad."

"And his family?"

"Yes, yes. Why I could give him eight shillings a week for the most part of the year, and nine shillings at extra times, if he is regular, and works well. I never make any difference for wet days, or days half wet, as some do. I don't think it is right to put the hardship of the weather upon the party least able to bear it. So his wages, if he be deserving, may be considered eight shillings a week and upwards."

"And how do you suppose the family can live between this and winter, on those earnings?"

"Why, Sir, as to living on that sum, of course it can't be done, at any time of the year. One of the little fellows is a crow-boy on Eyre's farm, I hear; but he gets very little. I should say their living on the wages of these two is an

impossibility. But not more so than in many cases about us."

" How do you mean ? "

" I mean, Sir, that looking into the matter as narrowly as possible,—casting up with the utmost care the sums our labourers pay for necessaries, we always find that their outgoings are more than their in-comings. I will show you in a minute, Sir."

And Onslow and his wife produced memoranda of cottage expenditure which they had taken down as the cases came under their notice. And these indeed showed that the smallest supply of what was necessary to support life could not be obtained for the wages earned, where families consisted of six, eight, or ten.

" How do you account for this ? " asked Mr. Holloway, as he put down the papers.

" It is a great mystery, Sir. And I have never known any successful attempt to induce the people to explain it."

" I should not expect them to explain it ; because they are ignorant, and keep no accounts, merely laying out their money as they get it. But I should like to discover how it is that all the poorest families in the place habitually spend more than they receive. I know pretty well

what is given in charity ; and I am certain that cannot make up the difference.”

“ They get credit from shopkeepers,” observed Mrs. Onslow. “ That is the reason of the high prices of the articles bought by labourers. The shopkeepers are obliged to charge high, to make up to them for the scores which they do not get paid.”

“ Still,” observed Mr. Holloway, “ that would not explain so habitual an excess of expenditure over income. You look as if you saw another reason, Mr. Onslow.”

“ I was only thinking of what is in all our minds, no doubt ;—that old Groves could probably explain what we want. Where there is much game-preserving, the game is a great resource to poor men. The very poorest get something by the game in our neighbourhood, as, to my knowledge, this lad Voile has, and, to my fear, he will again. The miners, who can earn enough without, get more, as being cleverer men : trades-people from as far as Stafford,—really prosperous shoemakers and the like,—get more still . . . ”

“ Is it possible ! One would not think that such a prosperous business as the Staffordshire shoe-manufacture would leave inducement to poaching.”

“Where there is profit, Sir, there is always inducement: and there is much pleasure besides in the adventure of poaching; and no popular disgrace;—nothing more than the excitement of an amusing little mystery about their goings and comings. Well, then, there is that old fox Groves, who makes most of all. In all these cases, I have no doubt, if we were to see into their affairs, we should find a curious excess of expenditure over apparent receipts.”

“Mr. Treherne is very clever at finding reasons for praising game-preserving,” said Mrs. Onslow. “I wonder what he would say to so many people having their incomes improved by his and his neighbours’ game.”

“It is not the argument he would most rely on,” observed Mr. Holloway.

“And it is met in a moment,” declared the farmer, “by this;—that the money put into people’s pockets, partially, unfairly, and guiltily, by the game, is no more than would be got, fairly and honestly, by the proper persons, if there were no game,—or no more than is harmless.—Only let Mr. Treherne look at Frith’s farm, and he may see, if he chooses, how many labourers might and would be employed and fed on that farm, if there was a chance for anything to grow. Lord

B.'s tenants are many of them hardly placed enough: but it stirs one's indignation to see such a case as Frith's,—how he is going to ruin, in spite of all he can do to save himself; and how the food that God gave for man is devoured and spoiled by brute creatures, while our poor neighbours are shrinking to skeletons for want of food. I wish somebody could get Lord B. and Mr. Treherne to go over that farm, and learn the truth for themselves."

"They could not see it, if it was before their eyes," declared Mrs. Onslow. "Mr. Treherne would say it was worms or rats or birds or weather, or anything rather than admit it to be the game.—Yes,—even though nobody else had been troubled with wire-worm and crows and wood-pigeons, or a bad season. It agrees with his pleasures to say that pheasants are the farmer's best friends, and hares no enemies; and he will go on to say so to the last day of his life."

"I wish he would say so somewhere abroad, where such a saying would be harmless; and leave Frith and the rest of us to do what we like with our farms,—paying him handsomely for his game.—I am afraid he is not likely to stay away, Mr. Holloway; or we would make him a handsome offer to rent his estate."

Mr. Holloway smiled, as he observed that all this was in curious opposition to Mr. Treherne's own doctrine that the chief benefit of game-preserving was that it encouraged the residence of the country gentlemen on their own estates.

"Everybody is happy to see them," declared the farmer, "when they come down to lead a life—I will not say beneficial—but even barely innocent to their neighbours. And there are so many who do so,—so many who are capable of higher objects than sporting in a country life,—that there is no fear of our growing barbarous for want of having gentlemen among us. If Mr. Treherne, now, would stay away, as everybody but his sporting friends devoutly wishes . . . "

"And his servants, I suppose."

"Why, I don't know. There is the servant he cares most about,—Lisamer,—would be very glad, I fancy, to hear that his master was not coming home this year or two,—or to go somewhere else. However, I have no business with Lisamer's concerns. What I was saying was, that if Mr. Treherne should let his estate, either to a gentleman less given to sport than himself, (and I doubt whether there be such another as he,) or to us farmers, the house would be occupied,—there would be all the benefit of a gentleman's estab-

lishment in the neighbourhood, without the damage that he causes to the farms near, or the losses to the farmers, or the corruption and want of work to the labourers. He may be right enough about the benefit of landlords' residence ; and at the same time it may happen that we could very thankfully spare him, for as long as he likes to stay away."

"What would you do, if he would let you his estate ?"

"An association of us farmers would take it, and pay him a handsome rent. We would let the house and gardens, and, if desired, some of the shooting: but we should take very good care to keep down the game to a proper point. Those of us who are fond of sport would enjoy this part of our business. Then there would be fair play for the farmer with his capital; and in consequence there would be employment for all the labour that is now turned adrift. I would engage, and so would every farmer concerned, that in four years' time, every man and boy in the parish would be employed, and more wanted,—so that there would be a maintenance for several times the number of people supported by Mr. Treherne's sports. And then, when we look at the increase of produce that would be sent to market, over and

above what would be comfortably eaten here, I think it is plain that we could very thankfully spare Mr. Treherne."

"My dear," said Mrs. Onslow, "you are speaking very freely of a neighbour."

"I am, my dear; but it is time. It does not do to mince matters, and especially in speaking to the clergyman, when men, women, and children are starving, half over the parish, and vice spreading from our parish half over the county."

"I wish there were more farmers who would speak out," observed Mr. Holloway, "if there really are many who view this system as you do."

"There are, Sir, you may rely on it. I doubt whether all farmers in game-preserving districts are not of the same mind, as far as their observation goes. When wheat-growers find themselves robbed of from one to two bushels of wheat per acre, you may be pretty sure of their being much of the same mind in disliking the cause of the robbery."

"Then they ought to speak out, and tell the country what the loss really is. Have you ever estimated it on a large scale, Mr. Onslow?"

"I have got together a good many facts and opinions which show pretty well how the matter

stands. It is pretty well made out that three or four hares eat and destroy as much as one sheep. It is well made out that while food for stock is eminently wanted, to produce food for man, there is no growing tares where game abounds, and but little use in growing turnips. Some authorities, usually considered the mouthpiece of the landlords, avow that the loss of produce by game equals the income-tax. And others of the same order go further. They reckon the loss on wheat lands all round at a bushel per acre; which may be fair enough; for I have seen it in bad districts mount up from that to the total destruction of the produce. Reckoned at one bushel per acre, and reckoning the lands under cultivation in England to be no more than twenty-five millions of acres, and the price of wheat to be 56s. per quarter, here is a loss of £8,750,000 annually,—which is more than the poor-rate of this country ever amounted to.”

“ One cannot conceive it possible.”

“ I give you the computation as made out by the landlords’ friends, and as a matter of curiosity, observing that nothing is included here but the direct loss. No estimate can be made of the mischief of deterring from good farming, the support of idle labourers and their families, and

all the ill will and corruption introduced by the system. If you look at it as a matter of curiosity . . . .”

“ I cannot look at it so. It is true or it is not. If not true, what a fearful amount of jealousy and hatred between classes it reveals, —the bare existence of such a view! If true, how blindly are we praying for daily bread, and degrading our poor by giving them alms, legal or voluntary, and seducing them into sin and punishment; and, all the while, it is the game that is at the bottom of it; and if that were left to take its chance, there would be work and food for all ! ”

“ I am persuaded there would, Sir. If the game were left to take its chance, or, if preserved, preserved so as to do no mischief (which might or might not be possible) there would be work and food for every labourer in this country, and no need of fears about surplus labour at home, or getting our corn from abroad.—You see, Mr. Holloway, this is a large question; and not to be disposed of in Mr. Treherne’s method exactly.”

“ Have you told him so ? ”

“ I should not mind it, if I could get a hearing: but he is so prepossessed with his own ideas, and so satisfied with his own knowledge,

that he cannot open his mind to the realities of the case."

"My dear!" again remonstrated Mrs. Onslow.

"Go on," said Mr. Holloway. "Do not object to my mind being opened."

"And besides, Sir, you may get access to his, some lucky day. One thing that I want him to see is this. He may go on to the end of his days fighting with each individual complaint connected with the game; and he will not prove that there is not some great mischief at bottom to cause such a commotion. He may insist that the magistracy is good and impartial, and complain of their being slandered by the prevalent censures of them: he may insist that the worm and the bird are the cause of the destruction of our crops, and that the corruption of our labourers is owing to the depravity of human nature, and the discontent in game districts to the ill-temper of farmers in a body: still, any one may say the plain truth that while these evils exist in game districts and not in others, society will not be convinced that game is not at the bottom of it.—And then, in the same way, when he pleads that where there is game, the laws cannot but work this way and that way, and the magistrates cannot but do so and so, and

this kind of property brings necessarily this and that liability, the easy answer is,—‘ Well and good, Sir ! If it be so, then it follows that the game does more mischief than it is worth ; and it cannot be tolerated !’ What are you smiling at, my dear ?”

“ I was thinking of a servant of my mother’s, who was taken on account of respectable parentage. She was always tumbling upstairs or downstairs ; and her mother accounted for it by saying that Betty had weak ankles. Then, the corners of the furniture and window panes were left dusty ; and, when we complained, her mother said poor Betty had but indifferent eyes, and could not see very well.—Then, she never answered a call or the bell, or gave a proper reply ; and her mother declared that poor Betty had always been a little deaf. So my mother said at last, ‘ Really, Mrs. York, I am very sorry for Betty ; but if she is lame and blind and deaf, she won’t do for a servant for me.’ I was just thinking that if there is something in the game which makes magistrates hated, and laws despised, and farmers discontented, and labourers dishonest, we must, whether it is the game’s fault or misfortune, have done with it.”

“ In short, nuisances must be abolished,” said

Mr. Holloway. “The holders of the nuisance must remove it, if they mean to retain the privileges of social life.”

“I wish you could make Lord B. and Mr. Treherne see that, Sir,” observed the farmer. “It would do them and the whole parish more good than any sermon you ever preached in church.”

“And you will be doing some much-needed good, Mr. Onslow, if you can take on this youth Voile to-morrow.”

“There is no difficulty about that, Sir. Shall I step home with you? It is late; and the police speak of bad people about.”

Mr. Holloway had kept the farmer up quite late enough, and departed alone, never having dreamed of risk in his own parish, on a May night.

The moon had been long below the horizon: but the stars were bright, and the twilight still seemed to linger. Near the Onslows’ house, Mr. Holloway met the policeman, with whom he exchanged a good night, as often before. As he passed Jack Willis’s cottage, he saw that a light was burning, and said to himself that to-morrow he must come and see whether the infant was recovering. As he crossed the brook, he stood on the foot-bridge, to listen to theplash of the water,

and anticipate a few mornings of fishing in the next month.

As he entered a deep lane, he paused a moment, unwilling to lose sight, even transiently, of the starry sky ; and there was something in the feeling awakened in him by the spectacle which brought to his memory an old text, and to his apprehension a fresh and deep understanding of it ;—“The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing :” and he said to himself that he must indulge himself with a sermon on this, if he could make his view plain enough for the minds of his auditory. He meditated this all the way down the bowery lane, as far as Lisa-mer’s lodge. There he stood a minute or two, hearing a clucking and scurry in the yard which seemed an odd sound so late at night. He wondered whether a fox could have got among the chickens, and whether he ought to call up the people of the lodge : but, hearing nothing more for a few moments, he concluded it an accidental disturbance, and went on, meditating his sermon, of which he made notes as soon as he reached home, before the inspiration of the first conception was gone.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE LANE.

“Now, Tot,” said Mrs. Lisamer to her little one the next morning; “now where shall Tot go with mammy?”

To which the child replied by sounds which passed with those who knew them for a crow and a cluck. Once more Mrs. Lisamer smoothed the bright hair, and kissed the shining, newly-washed cheek, and then gave her forefinger to Tot, and told her to show the way. Tot went through her lesson very well,—showed where the sieve of barley was, and pointed to the bread pan for the crumbs, and held her little pinafore for a pretence of a supply, and clutched to her breast her store of six grains of barley and three bread crumbs. Then, when she met daddy at the door, though she pulled the forefinger, and wanted to get on, she dropped her little curtsey, and put up her mouth for a kiss, without shrinking very much from the rough chin.

Lisamer leaned against his door-post, watching Tot and mammy going to the fowl-yard, and laughing at the eagerness of the child, who outran her balance, and stumbled, losing a grain of barley each time, till at the yard gate, mammy was obliged to bestow a little more. Then ensued the one remaining ceremony that was gone through every morning; the baa of the pet lamb, which was wont forthwith to appear. Then the gate was opened, and mammy and Tot vanished.

The father's heart led him after them. Lisamer had lost much of his activity of late, though he was sometimes so restless that he walked the house at night, and could not sit through a meal. In the intervals of his restlessness, he was listless, —would lean against his door-post by the hour together, or hang over a gate for a whole morning, or sit all the evening, with his hands in his pockets, scarcely speaking, and being cross when he did speak. He was often too lazy even to walk the few yards beside the pool to the poultry-yard in Tot's train, when she turned her little head as she staggered along, and called "dad, dad" to invite him to follow. To-day, however, he did follow to the gate.

There he saw that his wife was standing in the middle of the little yard, looking round her with

a stupified air, while Tot was crowing and baaing with all her might, to bring out the fowls and the lamb,—no one of which company appeared. When Mrs. Lisamer looked round, and saw her husband, she turned suddenly pale.

“Where are they all?” he asked.

“I don’t know;—all gone, I think. My spring chickens, that I reared so carefully,—they are not here.”

Lisamer kicked open the gate, hurried round the yard and shed, overthrew the coops, saw that every place was empty, and was rushing away when his wife called after him,

“Stop, love! Do not let us do anything hasty. The ducklings are safe by the pond.”

“What have the ducks to do with the lamb and the chickens? Hush, child! Hold your tongue, I say!”

And he strode towards Tot, and shook her; whereupon the cluck and baa were immediately exchanged for a loud roar. Lisamer could not bear this; and he was out of sight in a moment. His wife caught one more glimpse of him running along the lane towards the village.

Tot was crying so violently as to demand instant attention. She was taken to the pool behind the lodge,—a piece of water about eight feet in dia-

meter and a few inches deep,—just big enough for the ducklings to splash and swim in. There Tot was led to forget her terrors in learning to quack, and driving the ducks into the water, and trying to pull a bulrush, and then making a plaything of it. Any one in the lane, overhearing the mother and child, would have thought Mrs. Lisamer a light-hearted nurse, by the mimicking and inciting noises she was making: but any one looking in her face would have seen it bathed in tears, and might have wondered that the feelings of the wife and mother could find such different expression at the same moment. She was thinking that she never could have conceived of her husband altering as he had done. He had had a hard place of it at Mr. Treherne's from the time he came: but it was merely vexation and fatigue that he had to encounter as long as his master was satisfied with him, and on his side. Now, Mr. Treherne had grown sadly peremptory with him, if not discontented. He would not listen to any plea of her husband's, but always cut him short, as if he was fancying grievances. She was sorry that there was any such point of honour among game-keepers as not leaving a place in a worse condition as regarded the game than when they entered upon it. If they could

but quit this estate, and go and live where the preserving was not so strict, or where her husband could be bailiff, or something else than a game-keeper, she believed he might recover himself yet. But what was to be done, if matters went on as now, she dared not think. And yet she thought of little else, night or day. Mr. Treherne would be coming home for the shooting season ; and she dreaded the sight of him : though nothing could well be worse than things were meantime.—Here was this careless and merry child, however, all unconscious of trouble beyond the rough words her father had strangely got into a way of frightening her with. When he was out, here was this happy little creature, to put her in mind to keep up her cheerfulness, and to consider that life was always chequered ; and that, when she had married Lisamer, and believed she was going to have a sweeter and happier life than ever any woman had before, she had been presumptuous, and had forgotten that God in mercy gives every one trials to bear.

Lisamer meantime was in search of the police. He met Bellamy the policeman (who had been on duty the night before) coming out of the beer-shop. Bellamy's brow was as much clouded as

Lisamer's : and it irritated Lisamer to find how indisposed the policeman was to make any stir in his affair.—Satchell had just been mysteriously confirming a suspicion held by the police in this neighbourhood, that they had been more than once shot at with air-guns in their rounds ; and that they would be shot at again till they were hit, or took themselves off. The people of this district, Satchell had conveyed, did not choose to be saddled with a police ; and they would scare or murder as many as were sent, till not a man could be found who would venture to come. There was no use in the authorities saying that the more were shot, the more they would send. It was in a man's own choice, Bellamy declared, whether he would stay to be murdered from behind a hedge : and a man who had a wife and children could not think of running such a risk. He had got off coming to this place as long as he could : and now, he should venture the loss of his place, or anything to get away. He was never before in such a savage neighbourhood, in all his life.

Lisamer told him that as he was here, he must please to serve his turn before he went away. They must learn or guess where his fowls were, and get a search-warrant. Bellamy declared it was too late : the fowls were out of the district

by this time, no doubt. But Lisamer said he could identify the lamb by its fleece, which could not be far off, if it were already killed ; and, being urged on by Bellamy's opposition, he declared at last that he was pretty confident that the missing property would be found on Groves's premises.—Mistrusting Mr. Holloway, he went to Mr. Sleath for a search-warrant, and got one directly.

There was no man in the world that Bellamy more hated and feared than old Groves, though Groves's air was always one of intense good-humour with the police and everybody else. It was Groves who gave a laughing hint to his poaching party to shake their game in the faces of the policeman they met in his rounds of an autumn morning, or who asked him to judge of the weight of a hare yet warm on the coldest winter night. It was Groves who, by means quite unintelligible, always learned where the police were to be at any hour,—sometimes before they knew it themselves ; and perpetrated the most provoking tricks or jokes, the instant their backs were turned. Groves had the credit of all the decoying rumours, all the misleading letters which perplexed the operations of justice, while the old man had such a knowledge of law, as far

as it concerned the rural districts, that he could never be found on the wrong side of the statute. Thus was Groves the most formidable and detestable personage against whom Bellamy could be ordered to proceed: and it was almost certain beforehand that Groves would come out triumphant, as usual, and make a quiz of justice at the beershop. All this did Bellamy protest, with iteration, and at last with anger, in deprecation of the search-warrant. But Lisamer was no less peremptory and angry. Mr. Sleath was on his side; and Bellamy could do nothing but obey.

He prevailed, however, so far as to induce Lisamer to wait till night, before executing the warrant. It could not be denied that if the insult were passed upon Groves in mid-day, when he could call his club about him by a whistle, the searchers might be mobbed, and would cut a sorry figure in case of finding nothing. It was agreed that Bellamy should occupy himself elsewhere till sunset, and Lisamer go about his business as usual, while a trusty person, appointed by Mr. Sleath, should watch Groves's house, to observe who went and came, and what was to be seen there during the day.

Lisamer told his wife at dinner-time that she must be in Primrose-lane, and within call of

Groves's house, by sunset. She might be wanted to identify the property, if it should be found.

Her timid attempts to beg off were not admitted. She must find somebody to take care of the child :—she must not fancy herself ill, nor cry till she could not tell a lamb from a fowl: she must make no difficulty about obeying her husband's will that she should be in Primrose-lane, punctually at sunset, walking as if for pleasure, and not putting any nonsense into business in which she ought to be glad to help.

While the husband and wife were taking their tea in silence, a messenger came on the part of Mr. Sleath, to say that his spy had reason to suspect that Groves was going out in his spring-cart, as soon as it was dusk. After a consultation of a minute or two, during which Mrs. Lisamer hoped she might be released from the duty she dreaded, her husband took his hat, gave her an admonitory look as he pointed to the clock, and went out, leaving his tea half-finished.

It still wanted more than an hour to sunset: but Mrs. Lisamer had to go up to the House, to ask one of the maids to come down, and stay beside Tot till her return. She would have been thankful to be permitted to ask another to be her companion; and she really thought it would look

more natural for two people to be walking up and down the lane than for her to be sauntering alone. But she now did not dare to do anything without leave : and, having succeeded in putting Tot to sleep so soundly that it was to be hoped she would not discover that a stranger was beside her, the anxious wife put on her shawl and bonnet, and stole out, already trembling in every limb.—She was very wretched about this night's business, issue how it might. If no lamb was found, it would be a triumph to Groves which would never be forgotten. If it should, she would have to appear as a witness at the trial.

It was a calm, sweet evening ; but she could not enjoy it. She was ashamed of herself for having grown so weak-spirited. She had actually cried, in spite of herself, when Tot pulled her gown, at the usual hour this afternoon for going to bid the chickens good-night, and when, to appease the child, they had visited the yard, and found no chickens. As Tot peeped, and called, and shook her little frock in impatience that the fowls did not come, mammy had actually cried ! And she was now swallowing her tears again at the thought of it, and of the same thing over again to-morrow morning, and till she could induce the child to be satisfied with the ducks.

Then a dancing briar striking her bonnet startled her: and presently she was startled again by the lowing of a cow on the other side the hedge,—a cow that she knew quite well, which was only going home for the night. It next struck her that she was walking excessively fast, while there was no need of haste. So she stood still at a gate, to look at the western sky, where the golden hues were melting into a pale rose colour.—She might take her time, she knew. It was still so light that every tree-top of yonder clump was painted distinctly on the sky, and the dragon-flies were still hovering over the runlet in the lane; and Tot would be sure, if she were here, to hold out her hand for each separate primrose.

When she again went on, and approached the end of the lane which opened upon the high-road, she saw that a little boy was crouching in the grass under the hedge, just within the lane. She turned back before reaching him; and he appeared not to observe her. When she had gone a few paces, she looked behind her to see if he was asleep,—in which case, she thought she would wake him, and send him home out of the dew. But he was not asleep. There was a sound of carriage wheels in the road; and the boy

jumped up, and ran into the road, and alongside the carriage, presently returning, out of breath, to crouch again. By the bare feet, and mere remnants of clothing, Mrs. Lisamer knew it was one of the little Voiles ; and she went up to him. It was Dan.

“ What are you about, Dan ? ” she asked.  
“ Not begging, surely ! ”

“ I ’m so hungry ! ” said Dan.

Mrs. Lisamer thought to herself that the poor boy was so brought down by want, and fear at home, and being much alone, that he was not able to say anything but this.

“ What would your granny say if she knew you begged of gentry when their carriages go by ? I feel sure that granny does not know it.”

Dan fumbled with a dock-leaf which he held crumpled up in his hand ; and in answer to all questions and remonstrance, he only muttered “ I ’m so hungry ! ”

“ Do the gentry give you anything ? Have you got any halfpence ? —Come, I ’ll give you this halfpenny if you will tell me.”

Dan looked steadfastly at the halfpenny, and then whispered

“ Granny will kill me if you tell her.”

“ I will not tell her, I promise you.”

“But if you tell anybody that will go and tell her.”

“She shall never hear of it, I promise you, Dan.”

The boy looked round him, and listened, and at last unfolded his dock-leaf, and showed two halfpennies.

“Well: now you will have three. And what will you do with them?”

“I’m so hungry!” pleaded Dan.

“And so is Bell, is not she? And Job? Will you buy some bread, and divide it with them?”

Dan pulled the grass, and made no reply. Another vehicle was heard approaching, and he escaped catechising, to beg again.

This time he did not return to the lane; and Mrs. Lisamer saw him peeping through the hedge, evidently hoping that she would go away. She saw that he did not want to be questioned any more; and she again turned down the lane, thinking what a death-blow it would be to granny Stott to know that these little boys were highway beggars, and learning the cunning of the tribe. After another turn or two, Mrs. Lisamer began to grow so nervous that she thought she would change the scene a little, without going out of call; and she therefore stepped into a field that

bordered the lane, and on one corner of which the gate of Groves's back-yard opened. She sauntered at length to the opposite corner, where there was an entrance from this field to a large breadth of wheat. If she had been startled before by the mere dancing of sprays, and flitting of birds, and lowing of cows, what was she now, when she saw a man lying along in a ditch! She began a scream, which he stopped by a signal.

“Don’t be alarmed, Mrs. Lisamer,” said he. “I am one of your party. I am watching by Mr. Sleath’s order. And here’s more game afoot than we knew of. There’s a fellow poaching leverets in this wheat-field. I’m only waiting,”—and here he looked at his watch,—“I’m only waiting for the full hour after sunset, and to be sure of the police being near, to hand the fellow over to them.”

“And then he’ll be gone,” said Mrs. Lisamer, with a hope that it might turn out so.

“No, no: there’s a friend of mine on the opposite side, to take care of that; and the lad is not over bright. We shall have him.”

And they had him, presently. It was Luke, with two leverets in his bag, and, contrary to Groves’s orders, with a stout bludgeon in his

hand. On being seized, he struck right and left, with the instinct of self-preservation: for he had not yet learned from Groves the lesson of being taken prisoner in a laughing way,—readily, and as if it was a joke.

“Now you have done for yourself,” observed Mr. Sleath’s spy, as he handed Luke over to the policeman, and shook some blood out of his own nose. “You have used violence, and so brought yourself under seven years’ transportation.”

“Hark!” said Lisamer, as the sound of wheels was heard in the lane. “Now for it, Bellamy!—But what are we to do with this fellow?”

“Leave him to me,” said Mr. Sleath’s spy. And at a low short whistle from him, his fellow-watcher came running, so that Luke was now guarded by two.

“Wife, you come with us,” said Lisamer. He saw how her limbs seemed likely to give way under her, and offered her his arm, saying,

“There now,—nothing can be more natural and easy, you see. My wife and I taking an evening walk, and falling in with Bellamy for a chat. We shall reach the gate first, sha’n’t we, Bellamy? If not, you step on quicker. My wife can’t go fast.—Do make haste, though, my dear!”

Groves was in his spring-cart, driving towards the high-road. He stopped, the moment he was hailed, and leaned over the side, and dangled the reins, as if he had no objection whatever to a gossip, late as it was to be going forth. After a few remarks about the weather and the crops, during which Lisamer dropped his wife's arm, and possessed himself of the horse's head, Bellamy produced his warrant, and declared his intention of searching the cart.

Groves's good humour was as imperturbable as ever. He threw the reins to Lisamer, and jumped out; and then, only asking them to be quick, as the evening was creeping on, chatted with Mrs. Lisamer while Bellamy ransacked every corner of the cart, finding only a horsecloth and some straw. Groves cast a glance at the men, and chuckled, when he saw them shake the horsecloth, and sift and smell the straw.

“ You are going to search my premises ? ” said he, as he re-entered his cart. “ Very good ! Very good ! And you will excuse my presence, I dare say, as you perceive my business calls me another way. You will do better without me, I dare say : and if you find any felony on my premises, you need not fear my absconding to America, you know. The whole country round knows old

Groves. There is a net-work of magistrates and police all round about me, as you are aware ; so that if I was as sly as a mouse, instead of being a big old lion, I could not slip away. A pleasant search I wish you both,—and the lady too : and a merry meeting to us to-morrow morning, to laugh about it. I shall be to be found at home any time after nine to-morrow morning ; or say, for honour's sake, half past."

He bowed to Mrs. Lisamer, nodded to her companions, and drove on.

" You are making a mess of this," said Bellamy.

" That is no affair of yours," replied Lisamer. " Make haste and search his house. That is what you have to do."

" And get shot for it some day ; or at least mobbed," muttered Bellamy : " and then you will say that it was my proper business, and no concern of yours."

" We 'll see about that when it happens," said Lisamer. " We 've no time to waste talking of it now."

Mrs. Lisamer heard the policeman say to himself that in this place the decent people were as brutal and savage in their tempers as any criminals ; and her heart was ready to burst when she thought of her husband as he once was,—the man

whose kindly temper and gentle manners had made her think him more like her idea of a gentleman than either of his masters,—the last or the present. She assured herself that it was not his heart that was changed even now. He had always been of an anxious disposition ; and the worry he had been kept in for many months,—his game being so often stolen, the poachers growing more saucy on the one hand, and his master more peremptory on the other,—all this had so wrought upon an anxious temper that he was like a man possessed with a tormenting spirit.

Groves's family were in no way disconcerted by the search. It was neither new nor surprising to them. They evidently enjoyed the astonishment and annoyance of the keeper at the quantity of pheasants' and partridges' eggs, and the number of live birds, on the premises ; and, for the rest, they permitted every corner of the house, sheds and yards to be searched with perfect unconcern. Nothing suspicious was discovered ; and Mrs. Lisamer was thankful to find herself on her way home without having had occasion to cross Groves's threshold. She endeavoured to hope that no mischief would arise from this evening's offensive proceeding against

the old poacher, and that the whole matter might end with the loss of her property. She would be content to lose all she had, for peace and quiet, and to see her husband as he used to be.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE TENT.

Who had informed granny Stott that Luke was taken once more, no one could tell: but it soon came out among the neighbours that she was aware of it. Then these neighbours did what is usual, and therefore no doubt, natural, on such occasions ;—they hung about, to see how she looked and what she did; and then they met in twos and threes to report what they had observed. And with no little surprise did they report. Granny neither shut herself up with her trouble, nor was heard scolding, nor seen fidgetting about her work. While Bell was going about, crying as if her heart would break, and the little boys slunk away and disappeared, granny shut her door, and stood outside, leaning against it, with her arms crossed, looking up and down the road, just as if she had nothing to do, and nothing upon her mind. Now and then she glanced at her feet, which had burst through her shoes so

that she could scarcely be said to be shod: or she tried to pull forwards the remains of the cap which left her grey head almost bare; or she broke away, as if in an absent fit, the rotten wood of the door-post and window-sill. But, for the most part, she stood still with her arms crossed, looking up and down the road.

The neighbours wondered whether she was expecting anybody,—whether she had reason to hope for money or other help from a distance. They thought of inquiring of Bell: but, for once, they felt they could more easily speak to granny herself, as certainly the calmer of the two. They ventured to appear to be passing her door, three in a body.

“Well, Mrs. Stott,” said one, “you seem to be looking out. I hope there is some help coming to you to-day.”

“We shall know that when the day is over.”

“And what a pity ’tis that Luke should be caught, when he was not doing anything so very bad;—not anything worse than many a one has done before him !”

Granny’s undisturbed look induced the gossip to proceed to observe,

“They say he will be transported.”

“Ay, he will,” said granny. “It would not

have been transportation till next time, only he beat the man that took him. That makes it transportation."

"Well, I 'm sure it was all quite natural to beat them,—he having a bludgeon in his hand."

"Why, it is what I should do," said granny, tattooing with her foot. "But it makes it transportation."

"O ! no ; it won't be that, I 'll be bound," said one. "Old Groves will come in and help him, as he did before."

"No, he won't," replied granny. "His orders are that the men carry nothing that they can do a mischief with,—not so much as a switch. And he can't help those that don't obey. So he says."

And granny still looked up and down the road, as if nobody stood before her.

"Then, there 's Mr. Frewer," suggested another. "I should be for asking him. He has got off many a one."

"He 's on the other side,—that 's all," said granny.

"What he ! the poor man's lawyer !"

"Ay, 'tis so," said granny.

"His day is come early," observed another,—"his promotion, as Groves calls it. Groves says that every lawyer he takes in hand gets pro-

moted as soon as he grows clever. When he has got off a few poor men, the gentry give him business, to get him on their side. 'Tis a pity it happens so just when Luke Voile wants him so much."

"Ay, it is," said granny, so indifferently that the gossips stared at each other.

"Well, I don't see that it is certain now about the transportation," declared one. "'Tis such a small matter taking a hare or two that, if the men don't press hard about the bludgeon, it may come out mere poaching: and then . . . ."

"Well, what then?" asked granny.

"Look at Waterston's case!" suggested another. "He is off to jail again, a third time,—and all for that one hare that he shot, that Sunday morning last year. 'Tis true, to my knowledge. They have got the tax-surveyor to come down on him now for the fine for shooting without paying the tax: and he is laid up for I don't know how long."

"Why don't he pay the fine, I wonder?" observed one. "'Twould be only selling off his things; and he could soon get himself comfortable again on coming out,—so many ways as he has of filling his pockets."

"They say his club keeps him pretty low,"

declared another ; “ though they won’t help him in this affair, because it is his own entirely.”

“ But, Mrs. Stott,” said the least knowing of the gossips, “ why should not you do the same ? If you were to sell off your things, and pay a fine, if you could persuade them to take it, Luke could soon make it up again when he comes out. Under Groves, a young man like Luke can make much in the game season, if he learns to be prudent. And besides,” she continued, not noticing the fire in granny’s eyes, “ ‘tis only selling them instead of having them seized. When you go into the Union,—which you must, whether ‘tis transportation or two years in prison for Luke, the parish will lay a hand on your things, and . . . .”

Her speculation was rudely stopped. Granny gave her a push which made her stagger backwards ; and then the old woman burst into her cottage, and shut the crazy door in their faces. There was a laugh upon their faces which they were very sorry for ; but they could not help it,—so sudden was the movement, and so amazed the object of it.

Granny would answer no knock or call : and nothing more was seen of her that day.

In the evening, farmer Onslow was driving his

wife and daughter Sally in his gig, later than it was their wont to be out, when two of the party exclaimed at the same moment that there was a smell of burning. One would think there was little in this,—so much and so often as it is needful to make fires out of doors in the country. But thoughtful men, living in a poaching district, and having any stake there, had for some time been very observant about fires. It was too probable that their time for incendiarism would come. While no man opened his lips on the subject of rick-burning, except to his family when his labourers were asleep, all were on the watch; and every sniff of smoke had brought out, on the coldest nights of the preceding winter, every farmer over whose house the wind passed. There had been, as yet, no incendiary fires: but Mr. Onslow stopped his horse, by a single check, when his wife remarked on a smell of burning.

He stood up in the gig, and turned his face to the wind, and said it certainly was so; and at eleven at night he did not understand it.

“It is not over our way,” observed the daughter.

“Quite opposite,” replied her father: “but it comes stronger. I am afraid there is a fire.—Yes,—look! There comes the red light!”

“ It may be accidental,” observed Mrs. Onslow.  
“ How far off, do you think, my dear ? ”

“ It is either a very large fire far off, or a small one near ;—small at present. We shall hear, in a minute, if it is any where near.”

Presently there were enough of the noises usually attending a fire to convince Mr. Onslow of its being somewhere so near that he proposed to drive round that way and see. His wife wished to hear a little more first ; and they therefore drove slowly on, questioning those whom they saw hurrying to the scene of the fire.

One said it was an out-house ; another that it was believed to be a barn : to which the Onslows made no reply, having nothing very comfortable to say. When a man who ran past, with a bucket in his hand, declared positively that it was a cottage—a labourer’s cottage—Mrs. Onslow burst out with

“ Thank God for that ! ”

“ My dear ! ” remonstrated her husband.

She half-laughed on perceiving how cruel her exclamation might appear ; and began to explain that such a misfortune might and would presently be repaired, and the cottagers be better off than before : but if a barn was fired . . . .

“ I understand you, my dear. But you don’t hear me thanking God in the middle of the high

road, that a labourer is burnt out.—If you are not afraid, we will go round, and see if we can be of any use.”

“ If the horse will stand it.”

“ We will go as far as he will let us.”

On the way, Mrs. Onslow declared herself not afraid to drive Sally home if, on arriving near the fire, the farmer should find a cool head and stout arm wanted.

It turned out that nothing was to be done: but farmer Onslow staid. It was granny Stott’s wretched cottage that was burning. The flames made short work with the tottering place: and, as for what was within it, granny herself would permit no interference, no attempts to save a single article. She guarded the door, walking before it, and turning from it every one who approached, till most people forgot the flames in watching her. The fire blew out at the window, so as to seem sure to catch her cap or her apron, flying in the draught. A burning rafter or two fell nearly on her head; and yet she stood at her post till some of the people said they verily believed she wanted to be killed. When the flames subsided a little, farmer Onslow was seen to be present, and many were the voices which called

on him to save the old woman,—to make her come further from the door. He did so. He laid a firm grasp on her arm, and drew her away, in spite of struggles which made the crowd pronounce her mad. When there was a sudden quenching of the glare, granny ceased her struggles, and looked round. The roof had fallen in. All possibility of entering the cottage was over, and granny was immediately quiet.

While some in the crowd were bemoaning her fate, and saying that misfortunes never come alone, and wondering how she would bear to go to the Union, now that her grandson was lost to her, and her cottage burnt over her head, there were others who looked mysterious, and whispered that the little boys could tell how the fire came. Some gathered round Job, who did not know of any harm in relating what he had seen. He told every body that asked him what he knew. He told how Dan and he had been waked up, when they were sound asleep on their straw, by Bell's crying aloud "O don't! don't, granny!" and then they saw Bell dressing herself as fast as she could, and at last, when half dressed, throwing her arms round granny, to get the matches out of her hand, while the thatch was already beginning to burn. But granny was stronger than Bell. She

threw her off, and said Bell did not know what was for her own good: that they would live in the lane now, like the wild animals, with no old things for the workhouse people to come and seize, for the neighbours to laugh at. And then, when Bell and they ran out of the cottage, in fear, and to call the neighbours, granny was setting the thatch on fire in several places, and had put fire to her old bed. And then she came out, and stood before the door, as every body saw.

Many eyes were turned upon farmer Onslow, for directions as to what to do about granny and the children. Some of the neighbours would willingly have taken home the Voiles; but no one pretended to venture upon an invitation to granny.

“ Let us wait a little, and see what she does now the house is down,” said he. “ To-morrow she will be arrested, of course, to take her trial for arson. There is no fear of her escaping, poor soul! and I don’t see that she can hurt herself or others any further before morning.”

Granny, who could not be still, presently showed what her plan was. She meant to live in the lane: and she led the children to the bit of grass that had taken her fancy, and said their tent should be there. At a hint from farmer Onslow,

the neighbours humoured her. One brought a wagon-tilt, and fixed it high enough for the children to have air and room inside. Another spread sacks on the grass, for them to sleep on. One very poor man gave the boys the bit of bread which was to have been his breakfast in the morning,—a proceeding invisible to farmer Onslow, who would not have permitted it. He left a shilling with the wife of a cottager, where-with to supply the family with a meal in the morning, saying that by midday the magistrates would have shown what they meant to do in this terrible case.

Farmer Onslow was the last who remained on the spot. Before one o'clock, all the gazers had gone home, by his advice. The children were in the tent, just within the entrance of the lane, and it was to be hoped they were obeying the injunction offered them on all hands,—to go to sleep as if nothing had happened. Granny chose her own position, which was sitting or crouching before the entrance of the tent. There the farmer watched her for a while, before he turned homewards. As he did not wish to approach her, he could see by starlight only the dim figure of one who seemed to sit motionless. But when a breath of air passed over the ruins of the cot-

tage, and blew up a transient flame, or caused an explosion of sparks, granny's half-clad figure and haggard face became visible,—her grey hair falling down by the side of her hollow cheeks, and her eyes wide open, so that, as the farmer said to himself, there was no chance of her sleeping to-night ; and he was thankful it was such a clear warm night. He saw that while her attitude was fixed, and her arms locked across her breast, her head moved incessantly from side to side, as if she were suspicious of an attack from either hand.

“ It may be all for the best, as things had come to such a pass with them,” said the farmer to his wife and daughters, when they let him in on his return home. “ She will be taken care of after the trial ; and the children . . . . ”

“ Will they bring her in mad ? Is she mad ? ” asked Mrs. Onslow.

“ Enough so for a court of justice to acquit her, I have no doubt. Though juries sometimes go too far, and sometimes not far enough, in cases of crime done in insanity, I don’t imagine they will make any difficulty about poor granny being crazy.”

“ She is crazy then ? ”

“ Not so that we have any business to charge it

upon Providence, in my opinion. She might have been as sane as we are, and might be again, but for such cruel provocations as would put most of us off our balance. To me it is clear,—but I trust the jury will not get hold of it so as to make out this act of hers a wilful one;—to me it is clear that the last overpowering thing was the fear of her goods being seized, as the neighbours told her they would be. The pride and study of her life have been to be respectable, thrifty and tidy; and her heart has been breaking this long while as she saw her place and family sinking into wretchedness and ruin. When everything was gone to shivers and tatters, she shut her door, and let nobody see what was within. And then, the prospect of the officers coming to make a seizure in the eyes of all the neighbours was too much for her, and she took care to burn up every thing. There she is sitting now, poor soul ! looking at the ruins, and, I fancy, well satisfied that she has escaped that shame.”

“ Well; I would sooner be she, at this moment,” said Mrs. Onslow, “ than some that have helped to bring her down to sit in the lane all night, with nothing to think of but despair.”

“ What will Mr. Treherne say ? ” observed Sally.

“O ! it is all ready to his tongue,” replied her father. “He will denounce incendiarism and crime in general, and the old woman’s pride in particular :—he will preach to us all about pride being the vice by which Satan fell.”

“And he will make out, somehow or other, that this affair is all your doing, my dear,” observed Mrs. Onslow.

“No doubt of that. And no matter to any body but himself, if he does. We have only to go on doing the best we can for our neighbours.”

“But what weary work it is !” said the wife. —“How very little is the best we can do, when Mr. Treherne and Lord B. and their game come in and spread ruin faster than we and all the parish besides can repair it ! ‘Tis weary work and sad.”

“It is, my dear. But it *is* our work ; and half the benefit of it depends on its being done with good heart. And really, I should, for my part, sooner weary of shooting and coursing, and dining, and swearing at game-keepers, and lecturing the poor, than of setting the destitute to work, and raising the degraded in their own respect.”

“Yes, indeed. It is what we cannot do, I see now, that is wearisome ; and not what we can. Do you think, dear, we could find anything for

these poor children to do, when granny is taken away?"

"I 'll see, my dear."

"I am afraid the boys are not over good,—not trusty. They have been driven to beg and be sly,—if not to pilfer. You ought to know that."

"I do know it. But they have not had a trial yet of steady work and bread enough. That may give them a chance. I 'll see about it."

"And Bell is a good girl, people say," pleaded Sally.

"We 'll see about it," again declared the farmer, as he looked to the bolt of the front door, and hoped to himself that God would have mercy this night on poor granny in the lane.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE LODGE.

“ HERE, dear ! here is a letter for you,” said Mrs. Lisamer to her husband, as he came in to dinner, one day at the end of September. “ A letter from master, I think.”

Seeing her husband’s hands shake a little as he broke the seal, she went on—

“ I almost hope master may be coming down. It is a very different thing now from what it was. I’m pretty sure master would be well satisfied and pleased now. And if he and his friends come and enjoy a good day’s sport, I think it would do you more good than it would do to any of them, dear.”

“ Let ’s hope so ; for they are coming,” said Lisamer. “ They will be down for the first day of the pheasants. Well, I knew it must come, and the wonder was they were not here for the first day of the partridges.—The day must come ;—I knew that. And I have done my best.”

“ Yes, indeed ; and all seems pretty right at

this time. The poachers have been very quiet lately.”

“ Yes : I don’t understand that. I sometimes think there must be something brewing.”

“ You should not think that, dear. Why should you think that ?”

“ Because poachers that have once made great gains are never quiet again. Lord B.’s keepers are of my opinion.”

“ Well : you and they ought to know best. But old Groves’s club is reduced, to our knowledge : and it may be so, more than we see.”

“ Why, that lad is transported, and out of the way ; and another of them has gone to be a town thief, finding it more profitable.”

“ More profitable ! Who told you that ?”

“ The police. When a man is once marked, you see, in the place where he lives, so as to be pretty sure of a good deal of punishment, he is tempted to do what brings him in more profit for the same amount of punishment. And silver teapots and such things sell for more than game. That’s how it is.—But those two men won’t much weaken the club.—However, there’s Waterston gone too. I forgot him.”

“ He has something to do with the miners’ union, has not he ? Will that take him long ?”

“ It is not that that he is out about now. He is a delegate of the Chartist, and he is travelling for them.—Ay, I suspect they are not quite aware who they have got hold of. I fancy they are taken with his glib tongue. He talks in a very stirring way about the hardship of the laws; and he carries away a good many by his speaking.”

“ And he has really something to say about that, it must be owned,” said the wife. “ Such a quantity of punishment for that one hare that he shot is enough to exasperate any man.”

“ Well: he is lecturing in some of the mining districts against the government and laws;—about his having no voice in the government, and the laws being made for the rich, only to oppress the poor.”

“ Dear me! and I remember him, when we were at school together, as quiet and mild a boy as you could see. How he would have stared, and everybody else too, if his fortune had been told,—that he should go about lecturing against the government and the laws! I should almost as soon think of Tot here being a queen on a throne, one day.”

“ With a crown on her pretty bright hair,” observed Lisamer. “ Come, Tot! come to daddy. Daddy will make her a crown.”

Tot hesitated at first: but she was growing less afraid of daddy every day. And now, when he tempted her with some long, smooth, shining pheasants' feathers, she ran to his arms at once: and he amused himself with making a paper circlet for her head, and sticking feathers in all round, like the Indian queen on a sign-board: and then he lifted her up, to look at herself in the glass, and told her she was crowned now, like Queen Victoria. And he made her nod to herself, and wave her plumes, till his wife told him his dinner would be cold if he did not come.

When he went out, after dinner, she thought to herself what a blessing it would be if he should keep up his spirits in this way till he should have met his master. For some few weeks now, he had been growing more like himself, with occasional visitations, however, of the evil spirit: and his countenance had resumed so much of its old expression, that she trusted Mr. Treherne would not be reminded to lecture him about discontent, and be peremptory with him about cheerfulness, or—what was almost as bad—joke him, or joke at him, about blue devils being a gentleman's privilege. Her heart would flutter, she felt, till the first day of sport was well over. If that

should be prosperous, however, she hoped for a season of comfort, in comparison with many past months.

Lisamer's cheerful mood did last. The day of Mr. Treherne's arrival came; and in the morning, Lisamer and Tot were merry together, as had now become their custom. The little queen, having once enjoyed the crown, had no idea of dispensing with it when daddy came home, as she thought, to play with her: and crowned she was, three times a day, without fail.

Daddy was just laughing at her pretty gabble to the glass this morning, when his wife, standing at the table, saw that some one was beside the window—apparently leaning against the wall of the house. She stepped to the open door to see; and perceived it was Pole,—with a face whose expression shocked her. On meeting her eye, he roused himself, came to the door, gently put her in with one hand, and beckoned out Lisamer with the other. Lisamer set down the child, with a haste which caused a roar of terror, rushed out of the house, and, before his wife could take up Tot and reach the door again, was walking away rapidly with Pole. She dared not call, even if she had thought he would hear her. Some misfortune there certainly was: and how

long she must wait to know what, she could not tell.

Nobody came near her, all the morning: and she did not venture out to inquire, feeling that she had no right to disclose any anxiety about what might be an affair of her husband's honour, or of secrecy due to his master. All the morning, she watched, worked, and grew nervous; and was at last completely startled by her husband's voice at the door. Wretched as he looked, he spoke calmly. He told her that how he should meet his master he did not know. The covers had been so poached the night before, so nearly stripped, that there would be no sport for his master's friends; and no possibility of disguising the fact so as to give them at least the pleasure of going out.

"Then let us face it boldly, this once," said Mrs. Lisamer; "tell the truth, and go away, if Mr. Treherne is angry."

"'Tis not that," said Lisamer. "'Tis not the anger. There is the mortification and disgrace, and loss of character in my business; the ...."

He turned, as if to go away.

"Stop, love," said his wife. "I don't ask you to come in to dinner. I know you can't: but here's a bit of meat and some bread: and you

can get a pint as you pass the Lion. Don't let your strength down to-day. I'll have a nice warm supper for you."

Before the supper was put to the fire, Lisamer came in,—nearly an hour sooner than his usual time.

"I hope you are hungry, dear," said she. "I will have supper ready presently. I hope you are hungry."

"No; I'm not hungry; but I'm cold," said he, drawing close to the small fire, which his wife had kept low, because she thought the evening very warm. She put little Tot between his knees, not only that her hands might be free, but as an amusement to him. But he took no notice of the child.

"I saw the carriage," said he.

"What carriage, love? Whose carriage?"

"Why, you—you fool!—my master's, to be sure."

"Mr. Treherne's! Why, I thought he was not to come till to-morrow."

"Ay; but he is arrived; and so I came home. His favourite breeding birds are gone."

"O! that's a bad thing! That's the worst of it all! But it was no fault of yours."

"My master will say it is. He will say I ought

to have been out every night, and have fought the whole club before I had let his breeding birds be taken."

To all that his wife said, he returned no answer. He sat by the fire-side, not heeding Tot, who was playing with his buttons, but leaning back in his chair, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling, where his guns were supported by staples. His wife saw him shiver, and laid her hand on his.

"Why, you are chilly, dear," said she. "I will get some furze and put on the fire; and that will give out a fine heat presently."

She was stepping out at the door when he called her back with vehemence, to take the child. What did she mean by leaving the child with him?

Trembling, she held by the door-post, and beckoned to Tot, who ran to her, and held by her gown as they went to the shed for some furze.

When they returned, Lisamer was not there; and his wife made haste to revive the fire, to have a bright blaze when he came in. Then her eye fell on his hat, which was on the table where he had put it at his entrance. An unaccountable impulse carried her eyes to the ceiling, when she at once perceived that the double-barrelled gun was gone, while the other remained.

“O God!” she groaned, as she rushed to the back-door, which stood wide. Before she crossed the threshold, she heard the sound of which her heart had forewarned her. Tot stood crying at the noise of the shot, while her mother sprang out and left her alone.

Lisamer lay dead, with his head in the pool, and the gun half in the water beside him. It was found by those who ran up on hearing the report of the gun, followed by the shriek of the wife, that he had so curiously entangled a bulrush with the triggers of his piece that when he had put the muzzle to his mouth, and trodden on the bulrush, he shot himself through the head.

While some, not knowing what else to do, brought in the body, and laid it on the floor, covering up the shattered head, others ran to the House with the news, and one went to the clergyman.

Mr. Treherne came down to the lodge immediately. There was a suppressed groan heard among those who were gathered about the house; a hostile announcement of his approach; and Mrs. Lisamer rushed once more from the back-door, and hid herself in the shed.

Mr. Treherne asked for her, with grave concern and kindness: but he could obtain no account of

where she was ; and he perceived that nobody chose to go and seek her.—He then despatched a messenger for the other keeper, Pole, whom he must see, as he declared, immediately.

While the messenger was gone, Mr. Treherne looked about him, the silence being unbroken except by a stealthy whisper among the neighbours, and Tot talking to her daddy's buttons. Lisamer's hat was still on the table. His master took it up and examined it. The meat at the fire began to burn ; and, at a signal from Mr. Treherne, a woman removed it. On this, the smouldering furze sent up a stream of sparks ; and the child fidgetted and cried out with delight.

“ Is that his child ? ” asked Mr. Treherne. “ Why do not you remove it ? ”

The child resisted at first ; but presently pounced upon one of the long glossy feathers she was so fond of, escaped to her daddy, and tried to get him to hold the feather, to put it on her head.—Mr. Treherne turned away to the window, with tears in his eyes, and cleared his throat several times, though he did not seem to wish to speak.

From the window he saw Mr. Holloway approaching, and hastened to meet him. They shook hands in silence.

When they reached the door of the lodge, Mr. Treherne said—

“I will leave you here. The poor woman will wish to see you, of course, though I suppose she declines any consolation that I could offer. I have not seen her.—I am only waiting to see Pole, to desire that everything proper may be done, and learn something of the facts: for these people seem all smitten dumb. Then . . .”

“You will not see Pole,” said Mr. Holloway.

“God bless me! what do you mean?”

“Pole has absconded. And I advise you not to make any search after him, or there will be another suicide.—Is it possible that you do not know the dismay these men have been in about . . .”

“O yes, yes! But it could not have been that. You don’t conceive it was that, surely! However, this is no place or time for conversation. Will you follow me presently up to dinner? Do, I entreat you.”

“I cannot. I am wanted here.—But I see,—you want me too. I will come up in the course of the evening.”

“I shall rely upon you.”

“I will come.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE CORNER TURNED.

“ Sit down. Sit down. I shall be at your service in a moment,” said Mr. Treherne, as Mr. Holloway entered. “ I am only . . . .”

And he rapidly sealed and addressed three letters, and, ringing the bell, continued—“ I am only trying to catch the post, so as to prevent my friends coming to-morrow night. I thought it best to put them off for a week, on all accounts.”

“ For a week ! your sporting friends ?”

“ They would find everything in such disorder at present, that they would not have much enjoyment. In a week’s time, we may have got things into train for them.”

“ Before these letters go, let me just ask you whether you do not apprehend there is risk in bringing your sporting friends here at all.”

“ I should hope not. I never find matters so bad as poor Lisamer always was sure to tell me

they were. I have little doubt I shall find there is game enough for four or five of us, for a few days, though I am aware the plunder has been very serious.”

“ I am thinking of something quite different. What I mean is that your game having brought men to the pass of shooting themselves, I fear lest men should next be tempted to shoot you.”

“ Pshaw ! Holloway. Is it possible you do not know the constitutional differences in men !— that Lisamer was just the man to shoot himself in a panic . . . .”

“ And what say you to Pole ? I meant more than I now choose to tell you by warning you not to pursue him, lest we should have another suicide. But no more of this. I did not come to obtrude my thoughts and feelings on an occasion which speaks for itself. But in truth, I do not think it safe that you should go out sporting here, in the present state of people’s minds.”

“ Such are, in my opinion, precisely the times when we should assert ourselves and our rights ;— precisely the times when yielding would be the most fatal. However, I confess to you, Holloway, that I am not blameless in my own eyes, in regard to my share in this dreadful business.”

Mr. Holloway’s stern expression of countenance

and manner relaxed, and he drew his seat to the fire cheerfully.

“I ought to have chosen my man more carefully,” declared Mr. Treherne. “I might have known, from the poor fellow’s deportment,—and from his countenance, for that matter,—that sooner or later he would fail in some emergency where vigour and off-hand courage were required. I might have foreseen that mischief would come of it.”

“How do you mean?”

“Why, every man of us knows that poor Lisamer ought to have been on the watch, and to have fought these fellows that have been plundering me. A sound drubbing on former occasions would have prevented last night’s poaching: and a sound drubbing last night was what the occasion required. The poor fellow felt this;—whether at the time there is no saying; but certainly afterwards, when it was too late. In the consciousness of this remissness, you see, he did not dare to encounter me. I take to myself my share of the blame for putting into such a post a man who had not spirit enough for it. I shall ever lament it. And now, let it pass.”

Mr. Holloway started up, leaned his elbows on the mantel-piece, and hid his face in his hands.

“ It is a dreadful business,” observed Mr. Treherne. “ And I feel particularly for you in it.”

“ Treherne ! ” exclaimed Mr. Holloway, turning round to him with a face of anguish, “ I wish you would go away.”

“ What ! Go away ! My dear fellow, what do you mean ?—Come,—say what you mean.”

“ I must at such a time as this.—Treherne, I wish you would let your estate here, and go to some other. You have other property, in more places than one: and nowhere could your presence be so . . . so . . . what it is here.”

“ The first duty of a country gentleman, Holloway, is to live on his estate. And no man is more resolved to do his duty than I am.”

“ Then come back when we have retrieved ourselves a little; but leave us a breathing time. You well know that your estate is unproductive—the neighbouring farms yielding bad rents, our harvests impaired, your tenants discontented, their labourers corrupted and exasperated; and now, here is suicide and flight,—flight to another country and to the darkness of the grave,—from before your face ! You must go away, or I know not what will become of us.”

“ Come, no more of this, Holloway ! I can

make great allowance for you,—great allowance this evening for you; and at all times for the clergyman of my parish. But there is a point beyond which . . . .”

“ Beyond which the voice of man can scarcely reach you,” declared Mr. Holloway, “ since the hand of Heaven works in vain before your eyes. May God awaken you to a sense of the position in which you stand! ”

“ When it appears in a new light to me, I will let you know, you may rely upon it, Holloway. I have shown you that I can confess myself wrong. But I have my own views of duty; and till they change, I shall live on my own estate, in the way I think fitting. I am never induced to anything by cant, as I thought you had known. —Well, well: I don’t apply the word ‘cant’ to you as originating that set of considerations. I mean only that I think you too easily caught by cant, as every clergyman is apt to be, in regard to game-preserving;—even you, it seems, though you have enjoyed sport in your time more than many clergymen who take on themselves to talk of what they know nothing about.”

It was not cant, nor any change in his view of duty which induced Mr. Treherne, in the course

of the next year, to let his estate, and go to another where, though his property is not so large or well situated, he trusts that he may be able to get up, pretty rapidly, a considerable head of game.

It was chiefly the failure of his game that drove him away. There were also serious deficiencies in his rents and produce. And perhaps, though he would not own this to himself, he found the popular hatred, after the death of Lisamer and the ruin of the Pole family, more than it was worth while to endure for the sake of sporting pleasures so impaired as his were now.— He was abundantly heard of, through the newspapers and by private report, in his old neighbourhood; and was not at all likely to be ever forgotten. But he did not come.

His estate is let to five farmers, whose tenancies lie round about. They have let the House to a family who are very well liked in the neighbourhood. The farmers are bringing the land into a state of good cultivation, leaving the game to take its chance, and finding enough remaining to gratify, with a day's shooting and coursing now and then, such of them as are fond of sport. Under this arrangement, the poaching club is dependent on Lord B's. and other estates, and

has almost ceased to be considered as belonging to its original district. At the same time, the rates are reduced; and, as more labourers are wanted in the fields, fewer find their way to jail. —Mr. Holloway enjoys fewer social rambles and dinners with sporting acquaintances than formerly: but he thinks it a good exchange for these that he has easy sleep at night, peaceful days, in and out of the season, few game cases at Petty Sessions, and Sundays which, in comparison with those of old, beseem a Christian land.

THE END.

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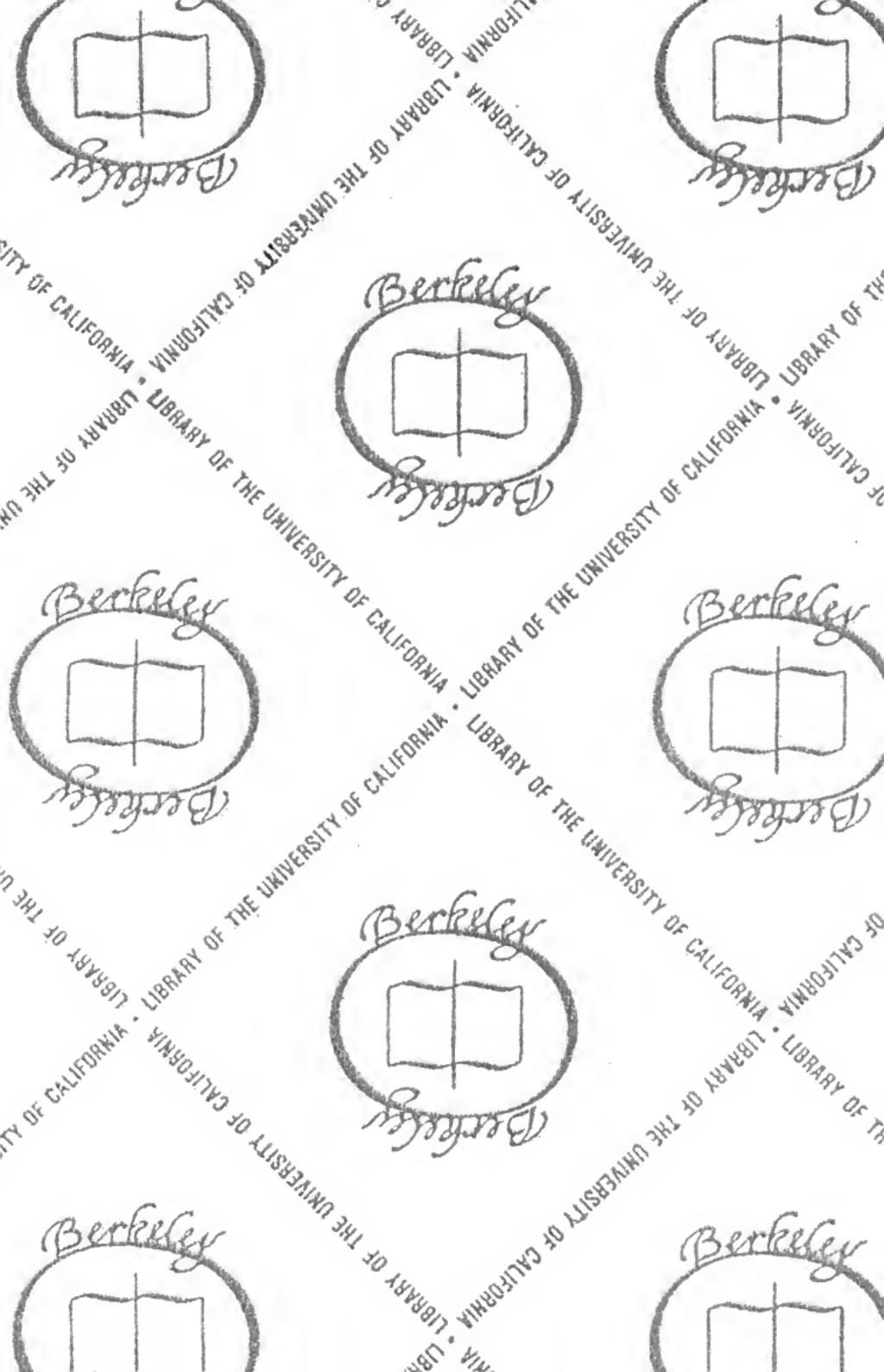


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